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WINNIAN AUSTIN LISTENED TO HER SECOND OFFER OF MARRIAGE AND SAID "YES."

## WINNIE'S FLIGHT

[NOVELETTE]  
(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

### CHAPTER I.

**M**ANY girls have taken flight, even in these prosaic times, for various reasons. Some have left home in a fit of pique at parental reprimand, some have gone at a lover's bidding, some have left their friends just to seek their fortune, but very, very few can ever have set off on a journey impelled by the motive which drove Winnian Austin from her father's roof—namely, to avoid a lover.

Winnie was the eldest of a tribe of children,

who had come into the world so soon after each other that there had always been a baby at the Rectory since the Rev. Walter Austin brought home his wife and child, full of glad triumph at receiving such a valuable patronage as the living of Dornington, which brought in something over two hundred a year.

That was a long while ago now. The white-robed baby had grown into a tall, womanly girl of eighteen. Death had visited the Rectory nursery (mercifully, the parishioners considered) three times, but there still remained nine children, descending from Winnie herself to the reigning baby, whose age was computed by months.

As the Rev. Walter's income had not increased with his family, it was an uncommonly hard struggle to make both ends meet; but Mrs. Austin was one of those women

whose loving hearts are never soured by trials or poverty; and she actually contrived to be happy under circumstances which would have been intolerable to many people. She never seemed conscious of her turned dresses, mended gloves, and home-made bonnets. Her large family were the pink of neatness; and yet she found time to listen to the woes of her husband's poorer parishioners.

She was beloved by everyone, high and low, in Dornington; and there was a general feeling in the place that, though the Rector was a very learned man—"a fine scholar," as the villagers put it—it was his wife's kindly words and sweet motherly smile which had made the children such a happy, contented band.

The Rev. Walter was—not to put too fine a point on it—a man with a grievance. He

always thought he ought to have "got on" better. He loved his family after his own fashion, but he occasionally remembered that, as a single man, his income would have been comparative wealth. He hankered sometimes after the great world and its pleasures—not evil ones, by any means; only he would have liked to dine late, and keep a pony-carriage, to be able to order a new suit as often as he needed one, and to enjoy the society of those he considered his equals.

These desires, innocent enough in themselves, by being dwelt on, had so soured Mr. Austin's temper that he was an object more of fear than love to his own children.

They never expressed the feeling openly, but they were certainly happiest anywhere out of their father's presence. And Mary Austin, good, loving wife that she was, often wished in her heart that her husband was not quite so gloomy, not quite so far above the little trifles which made up the sum of daily life at the Rectory.

And Winnian was eighteen. Miss Austin had looked forward to her birthday for a good while, little guessing the trouble and perplexity it would bring her.

She sat with her mother in the June evening, enjoying the rare luxury of a tête-à-tête. The two next children had died in infancy; the next two were boys at school, so that after Winnie came a great gap before the six smaller ones, who were all in bed long ago. The Rector, however, could not be sent to bed, and rarely, indeed, did he go out, but to-night he was dining at the Hall; and his absence was a decided relief to his eldest daughter, who had reasons of her own for wishing to be alone with her mother, since that day she had received her first offer of marriage.

"He is a good young man," said Mrs. Austin, speaking of the would-be suitor. "I wish you could have cared for him, Winnie."

"Mamma"—and Miss Austin seemed more indignant than grieved—"he is simply odious. The children all detest him, and you know yourself the poor people would rather listen to papa's severest scoldings than endure Mr. Carley's patronage."

Mrs. Austin could not contradict the latter part of the sentence. Some year or two before a factory had been opened on the outskirts of Dornington, and brought with it a wonderful increase of population, so that the Rector found he must either engage a curate or find his work doubled.

He could not afford the first alternative, and was greatly averse to the second, when the patron of the living came to the rescue and offered to allow a hundred and fifty a year for a curate's stipend, on condition that his own nephew was selected for the post.

There was some reason in the wish, for Mark Carley would, in all probability, some day be Lord Alleyn's heir and master of nearly all Dornington.

Before he became such an important person he had taken Holy Orders, and, from conscientious scruples, would not relinquish his profession.

The only way in which he could reside on his future property was to give him employment there; and so, to suggest him to Mr. Austin as a curate seemed a very natural idea.

And, strange to say, the Rector jumped at it. He was a man who always did what was least expected of him.

His wife was prepared to see him indignantly refuse Lord Alleyn's offer, or, at least, to be on the most formal terms with Mr. Carley when he came. Instead, Mr. Austin accepted the proposal at once, and from the moment he was introduced to his new curate, became on the most friendly terms with him.

People said how charming it was of the Rector. Winnian reproved herself for believing her father only "took to" Mr. Carley because he saw at once the latter would never rival him in popularity; being his inferior

in learning and intellect, and afflicted besides, with a plain face and a manner which was the reverse of prepossessing.

If Dornington had been blessed (!) with numbers of marriageable young ladies eagerly desiring a husband, why, when Mark Carley might have been courted; but the place was essentially rural, and the influx the Rectory had brought were of humble birth.

Of gentry there were only half-a-dozen families. Most possessed young children, but the Rectory was the only house that could boast a grown-up daughter.

Winnian had not a contemporary of her own rank within walking distance. She had to make up with the companionship of small children, or else accept the condescending notice of spinsters of forty turned.

The curate was a great favourite with the aforesaid spinsters; but they were few in number, and too much his senior to aspire to marry him.

In their hearts they preferred a chat with the handsome Rector, who at forty-five could, when he chose to exert himself, be one of the most fascinating companions.

Poor Mrs. Austin! For weeks she had been conscious the curate was in love with Winnian. For weeks she had listened to her husband's self-congratulations that he should soon have one mouth less to feed; and lo! the luckless Mark, instead of addressing himself to Winnian's parents—and suffering them to use their influence—had gone straight to the girl herself, and been refused.

It said much for the curate's lack of attractions that the sole thing Mrs. Austin could say in his favour was—

"He really is a good young man, Winnian."

"I don't think I like good young men!" returned Miss Austin, frankly, "and, mother, darling, I have quite made up my mind I can't marry Mark Carley. Why, I would rather be a housemaid!"

The mother sighed. She was but mortal, and the thought that her first-born, the best beloved, might be safe from every trouble money could avert had been very sweet to her. Besides, there was her husband; what in the world would he say when he heard of Winnian's rebellion to his wishes!

"You know, dear," said Mrs. Austin, slowly, "it is a very brilliant prospect that you are refusing. Mark Carley will probably be his uncle's heir, and—"

"I don't believe he will. Not that it makes any difference. I wouldn't marry a man I despise just for the chance that some day I may be a countess!"

"Not the chance, Winnie," corrected her mother; "it is well nigh a certainty that Lord Alleyn will never marry again, and only a child of his own could be nearer to him than his brother's son."

"Well," and Winnian stretched herself lazily, "it has never been proved that both his sons died. Of course, there's no doubt about poor Lord Carley, since we all went to his funeral; but I don't consider Niel's death was ever proved!"

"My dear, you know nothing about it. The Earl put on mourning for him."

"I know, and it was reported the ship went down with all on board; but after that a few sailors were discovered on a raft, and there is no telling that poor Niel Carley may not be alive somewhere on a desert island."

"Winnian, you are too provoking!"

"Mother, dear, I am only trying to comfort you. You are vexed with me because you think, as Mark Carley's wife, I might one day be Lady Alleyn. I am telling you that it is only a bare chance, after all. All the same," and she smiled wfully, "I couldn't do it even if he were a duke!"

"Why do you dislike him?" asked Mrs. Austin.

"I don't know. I think it is his head; it is so unromantic. And then he is always trying to impose the occasion, and I

hate to be lectured. He considers himself perfection, and would never be satisfied until he had made his wife the same; and so, mother, dear, the post wouldn't suit me!"

"But what will your father say?"

Miss Austin shrugged her shoulders.

"I forgot to tell you that Mr. Carley would not accept my refusal. He said I was to take three days to think it over, and he would come for my answer on Friday afternoon. He went up to London to-day, and only returns on Thursday; so, you see, we have a little respite!"

"But, my dear, it will be impossible to keep it from your father. Even if I thought it right to conceal the fact from him, Mr. Carley will be sure to tell him after he has seen you on Friday!"

"I suppose so."

"And your father will be very angry!"

"He has no right to be!"

"Winnian! Don't speak of him like that!"

"Well, he hasn't," said Winnian, gravely, "for he married to please himself, so he ought to let me do the same!"

"Your father has had many trials, dear."

"And they have made him very cross and fidgety. I would do a good deal, mother, to avoid a scene with papa, but I can't marry Mr. Carley; why, I feel bored to death after half-an-hour of him. If I were shut up with him I should go mad in less than a year!"

"I am not urging you to marry him, dear," said her mother, gently; "only I am afraid a refusal will make things very unpleasant for you. You see, Mr. Carley is not like an ordinary curate; even if your father wished to part from him it would be difficult."

"And as things are, papa will delight in keeping him here just to annoy me! Don't look so shocked, mother; you know it's true!"

"You can hardly avoid meeting Mr. Carley sometimes," replied Mrs. Austin, "and it will be very unpleasant for you both!"

"Then I had better go away," said Winnian, composedly. "Of course, it would be horrid to be always meeting Mr. Carley, since he has made up his mind that it is only humility which makes me refuse the honour he so generously offers me!"

"Winnie!"

"Don't look so horrified, mother. Of course, to marry an Earl's nephew with a private income of eight hundred a year and the prospect of a coronet and an income of twenty thousand is a brilliant chance for a penniless girl. Only I don't think it was quite Mr. Carley's place to point it out to me!"

Mrs. Austin glanced at the clock, which pointed to ten. They kept early hours at the Hall, and so very soon the Rector might be expected home.

"I know," said Winnie, answering the glance, "papa will be here in half-an-hour, and we must settle something."

"Shall I tell him to-night, or wait until Mr. Carley returns?"

"Don't tell him, please, until I am safe away from Dornington!"

"My dear child, where can you go?"

She spoke in a troubled tone, for the Austins, like most poor gentlefolks, had few friends with whom they were on visiting terms; railway travelling was expensive; and so it came about that Winnian had never slept a night away from the ivy-covered Rectory since she came to it long years ago.

"There is Uncle Sampson," suggested Winnie, bravely. "Don't you remember when he wrote last Christmas he said he would be glad to see any of us at any time?"

Mrs. Austin paused to consider. She had been beneath her husband in social status, and her brother, a well-to-do tradesman, had never "got on" with the refined, sensitive clergyman. After declaring his Mary might do better than marry a poverty-stricken curate, Sampson Brown had made no further protest, but the relations had been very strained between him and the young couple, and after they left London, on Mr. Austin obtaining the living of Dornington, brother and sister never met.





Regularly every Christmas Mr. Brown sent Mary a present and a kindly letter. In the last letter he had certainly hinted he should be glad to see her or any of her children, but the Rector had negatived the idea instantly, and it had never been mooted again; but now, in her perplexity, Winnian fell back upon her uncle's invitation, and Mrs. Austin began to wonder whether it might not be as well to let her child go to Sampson.

Memory went back to the years when she had lived with him at Clapham, and enjoyed more of comfort and luxury than had ever been her lot as Walter Austin's wife. She remembered the kind, almost motherly affection of her sister-in-law, and she felt that at The Fir Winnian would certainly meet with a warm welcome and great kindness. Of course, the Rector would be displeased; but, then, there was a homely proverb asserting it was as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb; and since he would be in a rage at any rate on hearing of his curate's rejection, he could not be much worse if he had two causes of complaint instead of one.

Winnian watched her mother's face, and felt she had gained the day.

"You will let me go, dear?"

"I am afraid I must," said Mrs. Austin, slowly; "but, my dear, you may not like Clapham, and you know my brother is only a plain tradesman. Your father never got on with him."

"I am told a dozen times a week that I don't resemble papa in the least, and that I have not a spark of the Austin spirit, so I think I should 'get on' with Uncle Sampson splendidly. It is his wife I feel afraid of."

"You need not feel afraid of Emily. She is the gentlest, tenderest creature."

"I suppose," a little dubiously, "they wouldn't want me to serve in the shop. What does Uncle Sampson say, by the way? I never heard."

"Music. No, my dear, he certainly would not want you to help in the business. He only employs young men assistants."

"And when shall I go?"

"I must speak to your father first."

"Mamma, surely you don't mean to tell him!" said Winnian, aghast.

"I never had a secret from him in my life," replied Mrs. Austin; "and you know, Winnian, if you went without his consent he might send for you back."

"I see; but perhaps he won't let me go."

Mrs. Austin was alone when her husband returned. He was in an unusually amiable mood, but his first words filled the poor mother's heart with alarm.

"You will be glad to hear, Mary, that the Earl has noticed Carley's attachment to Winnian, and quite approves of it. He is good enough to say that he thinks my daughter a fit match for anyone, even his heir."

"I am so sorry, Walter. I fear you will be disappointed. Mr. Carley spoke to Winnian to-day, and she refused him."

"And why was I not informed?"

"I only heard it myself after you had started for the Hall. Of course, it would have been a good provision for the child; but poor Mr. Carley is not prepossessing, and one can hardly wonder at his not taking a young girl's fancy."

"A young girl's fiddlesticks!" growled the Rector. "Winnian ought to be ashamed of herself. Why, she would have been a countess, and could have provided for the children as they grew up. What does she want, pray, if Carley is not good enough for her? He's one of the most upright, hard-working young men I ever met. A model in every respect of a Christian. The girl must be an idiot!"

"I've done my best, Walter; but you know Winnian is high-spirited, and—"

"She shall marry Carley—if he'll take her after her abominable conduct—or else I'll know the reason why! High-spirited, indeed! She's been taught her Church Catechism, I should hope!"

Mrs. Austin hardly knew which portion of that admirable treatise set forth the duty of making a good match, but no doubt the Rector's mind was running on the obedience to parents enjoined therein.

"I shall speak to Winnian at once," he said, sternly.

But his wife explained that the culprit had gone to bed, and so Mr. Austin had perforce to postpone his lecture till the morning, and the poor mother spent a sleepless night in anticipating the storm she knew was coming.

Alas! everything went wrong on that ill-omened day. It poured with rain, and in his curate's absence Mr. Austin—who hated getting wet almost as much as does a domestic cat—was forced to sally forth to say morning prayers at the church half a mile distant.

He got drenched, and had the gratification of finding no congregation, whereupon he returned at once to find the breakfast, which was timed to be served by half-past eight, very far from ready twenty minutes sooner.

This finished his annoyance, and he finally sat down to table with a countenance so grim and awe-striking that the children ate their food in solemn silence, and even brave-hearted Winnian began to dread the ordeal before her.

It came very soon. Mr. Austin was quite ready for the fray. The moment he had finished his repast he turned to Winnian and said coldly, the satire in his voice making her wince,—

"If you are not too much engaged with your private pursuits, Miss Austin, I shall be glad to speak to you in the study!"

You might have heard a pin drop. The frightened children huddled themselves together in terrified silence. Winnian could not keep her limbs from trembling, but she answered bravely,—

"Yes, papa. Shall I come now?"

"If it does not inconvenience you. Mary," to his wife, who had made a movement as though to accompany her daughter, "pray do not neglect the children's studies. They will need an education sorely, poor things, since their sister is so selfish. You cannot help me, my dear, and I prefer to deal with this matter myself."

The study was on the ground floor just opposite the dining-room, being on the left hand of the entrance hall. In this room the shabbiness and poverty of Dornington Rectory were more apparent than anywhere else.

The Rector hated shams, and despised cheap things, however pretty. Consequently, when the furniture grew worn and disabled, he absolutely refused to have it replaced by such substitutes as the slender means at command could have provided.

Wherever Mrs. Austin ruled, good taste and skilful fingers had done wonders with but trifling cost. Hopelessly ugly and defaced furniture had been enamelled; floors had been stained; and art muslin and flowers hid many a defect. But the Rector was obstinate. His Turkey carpet was nearly in rags, and its colours so obliterated that no one could have guessed their tint; all his chairs were old and rickety, his curtains were darned in divers places; but it was of no use to protest; he refused cheap alterations, and in time had grown rather to pride himself on his den being the gloomiest, most uninviting room in the whole house.

Perhaps he regarded it as a proof of his unselfishness instead of a tribute to his pride.

It was a favourite lament of the Rector that none of his children took after himself; but though he might not recognize it, there were many traits in common between him and Winnian.

She had inherited her mother's violet eyes and dazzlingly fair complexion; but the hair which with Mrs. Austin (until trouble faded it) had been bright gold, was in Winnie darkened to a rich chestnut. The broad, open brow, the firm, well-shaped mouth were her father's very own.

She had never yet been in collision with him; now for the first time their wills were in conflict, and it was a case of Greek meeting Greek.

"Well," demanded the Rector, coldly, taking the best chair and placing Winnie before him like a naughty child of five years old, "I am waiting for an explanation of your conduct. Your mother says you have refused Mr. Carley?"

"Yes."

The monosyllable irritated the Rector. Suppressed passion sounded in his voice as he demanded, angrily,—

"Why?"

"Because I do not care about him."

"Rubbish! fiddlesticks!" cried the Rector. "Are you a milkmaid that you go in for such sentimental twaddle as love?"

"I never heard my mother was a milkmaid," retorted Winnian, quietly, "and yet I have been given to understand, sir, that she married you for love!"

"And ruined me," replied the Rector, suavely. "A rash marriage is a young man's madness."

"In that case, Mr. Carley ought to be very grateful to me for my rejection."

"Keep to the point," said Mr. Austin, gravely. "Perhaps you have not looked at the case plainly. I will put it before you clearly, and then, no doubt, you will see your error, and write a humble note of apology to my estimable friend, Mr. Carley."

"I don't think so, papa."

The Rector passed over this remark as unworthy of notice, and continued,—

"You are aware, I suppose, that Mark Carley is Lord Alleyne's nephew and heir?"

Winnian did not trouble herself to confide to her father her vague fancy about Lord Alleyne's younger son. She nodded assent.

"The Earl is an old man, Winnian, seventy turned, and he suffers—I may tell you this in confidence—from an incurable disease. He cannot live more than two years, a few months will probably see the end."

"I am so sorry," broke from Winnian, impulsively. "I like him so much, papa, better than anyone I know."

"His life is drawing to a close," went on the Rector, immovably; "two years is the longest space he can be spared, and then Mark Carley will be an English peer with twenty thousand a year."

"I know. But—"

"Besides his wealth, he will have vast influence," went on Mr. Austin. "There are three valuable livings in the gift of Lord Alleyne. Anyone of them is worth over eight hundred a year, and the men who hold them are all turned seventy."

"But what has that to do with me?" asked Winnian, bewildered.

"Nothing at all, seeing you are a monster of selfishness! A dutiful daughter would remember that Mark Carley would certainly give his father-in-law the first preferment he had to offer."

"I understand. You want me to marry Mr. Carley so that you may have one of the valuable livings."

"If you like to put it so coarsely, you can. Had the preferment fallen in in my old friend's time, it would certainly have been offered to me, but the three clergymen who hold the benefices, though old, are healthy. They will probably outlive the Earl, and then all power will be Mark's."

"But he is such a friend of yours, papa! He will be sure to think of you."

"Pshaw!" said the Rector. "He will not offer affluence to the father of the girl who has rejected him. If you persist in refusing Carley you ruin my prospects and rob your brothers and sisters of every advantage."

"But—"

Again he interrupted her.

"The Earl of Alleyne will have unbounded influence," went on the irate parent, "and if you married Mark, he could provide for the children, start the boys in life, find husbands for the girls as they grown up; in short,

Winnian, this union would be the salvation of your family."

But the girl never faltered.

"I cannot do it, papa!" she said, gravely.

"It is impossible."

"You mean you will not?"

"I mean that my only feeling for Mark Carley is aversion. I know he seems a model of all possible virtues, but I could never trust or like him. I seem to feel deep down in my heart that his whole life is a fraud, and that if we could but see beneath the mask he wears we should find he was a bad, unprincipled man!"

"I don't believe you have a heart at all, so you need not talk about what you feel in it. Then you refuse positively to marry Mark Carley?"

"I do."

"Very well. Then, understand plainly, my house is no longer your home. I have toiled early and late, I have denied myself every possible comfort—ay, even bare necessities—(this was slightly exaggerated) for my children, and when one denies me I must make an example of her for the sake of the rest! I will not be hasty, Winnian; you shall have twenty-four hours to think of it. To-morrow either you agree to marry my friend or you leave my house."

He waved his hand as though to intimate that the interview was over, and Winnie left the room.

To do the Rev. Walter justice, he had not the slightest idea that Winnian would take him at his word.

He believed that, to a girl who had never been away for a single night, and who possessed no friends at a distance, the threat of expulsion would be terrible.

He quite expected that the next day would find Winnian, tearful and repentant, ready to accept the rôle of Mr. Carley's fiancée; and, happy in the conviction that he had triumphantly quelled the first rebellion in his family, he went off to the neighbouring town, where he was due at a clerical meeting.

Mrs. Austin—with almost the first disobedience of her married life—gave her children a holiday as soon as her husband had started, and went in search of Winnian. For a few moments they wept together; then the younger and stronger spirit asserted itself.

"Mother, I must go away. Do you think Uncle Sampson would take me in and keep me until I can get something to do? I can't think of any other plan, and I won't stay here to be ordered away by papa to-morrow?"

Mrs. Austin stroked the bright head lovingly.

"My brother and Emily would be all kindness to you, I am sure; but, darling, do you understand that your going to them will anger your father?"

"He can't be much more angry than he is already, and if he turns me out of the house he can't complain of my going to the only relations I have."

"Well, dear," she hesitated, poor soul, but to her anything was better than hearing her husband turn her child adrift. If only Winnie went voluntarily, sharp as the pain of parting would be, it would have lost half its sting. "Will you go to Clapham?"

"Please; but, mother, the expense! It costs quite half-a-sovereign to get from here to London, and then there is the journey on."

"I know, darling! I can manage that! It is but little to do for you. Oh, Winnian, I wish with all my heart Mark Carley had never come to Dornington!"

"Hush, mother!" said Winnie, trying to smile, "remember, he is such a good young man! Papa will be home at six; do you think I could catch a train before that?"

"You must not go by a later one than the four o'clock," said Mrs. Austin, fondly; "even then it will be quite eight before you are at Clapham!"

"And you are sure that they will take me in? That they will believe my story?"

"Dear, I shall provide against their doubting you. I will go down to the post-office and telegraph to my brother. It is only ten o'clock; we shall get a reply by twelve."

It was the thought of a mother's anxious love, but it was just the most practical thing that could have been done, since it would answer the question, not only of Mr. Brown's good will, but of his being at home.

"Winnian has to go away. May I send her to you?" was the message soon flashing across the wires; and before Mrs. Austin had begun to expect a reply, it was in her hands.

"Send Winnian when you please. We will make her welcome!"

The Rector's wife packed her child's box with a lighter heart, and Winnian crept away to pay the only farewell visit she had time for or cared to make. She felt she could not leave Dornington without saying good-bye to the old man who had shown her such kindness.

Although the Rector's friend, Lord Alleyn was far from blind to Mr. Austin's faults. He knew him for a selfish, dictatorial husband, a careless, indifferent father; and for years past the kind old man had kept up the intercourse with the Rectory chiefly for the sake of Mary Austin and her children, of whom Winnian was his favourite.

When first the Austins came to Dornington the Hall had been a happy home; Lady Alleyn and her two sons were living, and all went well with the Earl's family; but when Winnian was a child of eight the Countess died, and troubles came thick and fast. The younger son Niel was—gossips declared—wild and unsteady. The mother's gentle influence removed, he grew reckless. There was but little sympathy between him and his brother, who was much older.

Viscount Carley, himself a model young man, was suspected of rather magnifying poor Niel's evil deeds. At last, two years after Lady Alleyn's death, the crisis came. Some dreadful discovery was made (Dornington never gathered the precise facts): either Mr. Niel Carley had been engaged in a gambling affray, or he had forged his father's name, or he had been living on supplies obtained by post office; no one could decide which, but all agreed it was terrible, and that when Lord Alleyn gave out his second son was going to try sheep-farming in Australia, it was only a neat way of saying that he had been outlawed by family compulsion for his misdeeds. Just a month later came the news that the Golden Fleecy, in which he sailed, had gone down with all on board.

Lord Alleyn mourned grievously over his prodigal. In those days he used always to be having Winnian, a pretty child of ten, up at the Hall to keep him company. Then, when the blow was not so recent, came Lord Carley's engagement to a duke's daughter, and the Earl had to try and rejoice in his heir's felicity; but, alas! the felicity was never consummated, Lord Carley died a few weeks before his wedding-day, and the heart-broken father went abroad.

He was absent six years; then, just as Mark Carley became Mr. Austin's curate, the Earl returned to the Hall, and Winnian found his old kindness and affection unchanged, while to her mother Lord Alleyn seemed almost like a good fairy, in so many little ways did he brighten her thorn-strewn path.

"Why, my child," cried the old nobleman, as he caught sight of Winnian's red eyes, "what's the matter?"

"Please, I'm going away," she answered, simply, "and I want to say good-bye to you!"

"Going away! Why, your father told me last night you were going to marry Mark, and I had been thinking you should both live here, that your sweet face might be the sunshine of my last days!"

"Please don't be angry!" pleaded Winnian, "but that's why I'm going! Mr. Carley did—did ask me, and papa says, if I refuse, I must leave home, and so—"

Something like an oath rose to the old man's lips, for the old Adam was not quite conquered; but he kept it back for Winnian's sake, and said, gently,—

"So that's your father's notion of Christian charity, is it? Now, my dear, listen to me. You have known me a good many years, and I hope you believe I love you almost as a child of my own. Will you let me speak to your father?"

"Please don't. Even if to please you he promised to let me stay, he would be angry always, and home would be miserable!"

"My dear, if it could have been that you fancied Mark I should have rejoiced, for I am very fond of you, Winnian, and I should like to think that you bore my wife's name; but I would never try to force your inclination, and I don't think, myself, Mark is exactly the sort of fellow to please a young girl. He is my nephew, my brother's only son, but my heart has never warmed to him as it does to you and your brothers and sisters. I have studied my nephew closely, but I can't make him out. He is a puzzle to me!"

"And you are not angry with me?"

"Angry, my child? No. Surely a woman has a right to decide a matter which concerns her so closely."

"Papa said I was heartless, and that I should never come home again!"

"My dear child, he will change his mind. Who will be organist, Sunday school teacher, and your mother's general helper while you are gone? I think myself, Winnie, that, bitterly as we shall all miss you, for your own sake we ought to be glad of anything that takes you away from Dornington. It has been a dull life for you, dear, and youth is the season for enjoyment. I am glad that at last you should have your share."

"It won't be enjoyment," said Winnian, sadly. "Uncle Sampson is only a tradesman, and mother says father never got on with him."

Lord Alleyn was accounted a very proud man, but perhaps he had come near enough to the other shore to value class distinctions at their true price, or else he took his nephew and the Rector as types of professional men, and was not particularly edified by the same, for he answered with a quaint smile,—

"My dear child, I don't count 'not getting on' with Mr. Austin a particular blemish; and as to trade, some of the noblest spirits in the world have stood behind a counter. Depend upon it, Winnie, the man who brought up your mother, and made her what she was, is worthy all respect."

"I quite forgot that he brought mamma up, and she owed everything to him. Did you ever meet my uncle, Lord Alleyn?"

"Never, Winnian. Your father had an absurd dread of its being known that he had a brother-in-law in trade, and rejected all intimacy. I believe Mr. and Mrs. Brown sent invitations till they were tired of being constantly refused."

"I must be going," said Winnie, rising. "I promised mother to be home by one."

"Give my love to her, child, and tell her not to fret; and, Winnie, take an old man's blessing with you, and, for the sake of our old friendship, let me give you a parting gift. Nonsense!" as she hesitated; "a young man always has presents when he is going out into the world, why shouldn't you? Until you feel at home with your uncle and aunt you won't like to ask them for what you need."

It was a crisp bank-note he slipped into her hand. Winnie put it into her purse, and—will it be believed?—forgot all about it when she reached home and found the children all in open grief at her departure.

Very pale and sad looked Mrs. Austin as she sat at the head of the table. This separation tried her, even while she knew that it was inevitable.

"I have sent round to Farmer Hodges to borrow his grey pony, Winnie, and I am coming to the station with you myself."



It was almost a silent drive. The farmer's son held the reins, and his presence alone would have prevented any private conversation; only when they reached the Adderley station, three miles from Dornington, and alighted, Winnie said, wistfully:

"You will send for me, mother, if anything goes wrong. If you were ill and needed me I would come, if I had to climb in at the window to avoid papa's knowing it!"

Mrs. Austin smiled half sadly.

"Write and tell me all you do, dear; and, Winnie, don't let your uncle and aunt think harshly of papa. They don't know him as we do and might misunderstand him."

In her heart Winnian thought that not to know the Rector as his family did was a decided advantage. Mrs. Austin took her daughter's ticket, and would have given Winnie all the change out of the precious sovereign, but the girl refused.

"Lord Alleyn gave me a parting present, mamma. I had forgotten all about it."

"Keep that till you are in your new home, dear. You may need silver for the journey. You will want a cab at Euston. Clapham is the other side of London."

"Mamma, promise me one thing—don't tell Mr. Carley where I am."

The train came up, and Mrs. Austin placed her daughter in a carriage. There was not much choice, for there was an excursion to some celebrated place about twenty miles from Dornington, which had produced a number of "cheap trippers," and Winnian thought herself lucky to find a seat where her fellow passengers, if homely-apt, did not each carry a baby or a bundle of provisions.

Another moment and they were off. Mrs. Austin turned away that her child might not see her gathering tears. Winnian forgot alike her father's anger, the Rev. Mark's affection, and the grief of parting from her mother.

All this and everything else was forgotten in the one thought that she was going to see new scenes and fresh faces. Like the girl in the dear old fairy tale, she was going out into the world to seek her fortune.

## CHAPTER II.

Six o'clock was the dinner hour at The Firs, for, though the Browns were wealthy and could have afforded a fashionable establishment, with a butler to preside over their meals, they kept to the simple habits of their younger days.

The Firs was a handsome modern house on the outskirts of Clapham Common. It boasted every convenience within, and its red brick walls gave it a very comfortable appearance without, while the acre of ground at the rear produced quite enough fruit and vegetables for home consumption, and flowers sufficient for Mrs. Brown to fill her vases as often as she pleased.

A gardener and a coachman were the outdoor retainers. In the house were four neat maidservants and a boy in buttons. An air of cheerful prosperity pervaded everything, and friends who visited Mrs. Brown always declared The Firs was a delightful house to stay in.

On the June afternoon when Winnian Austin set off on her first lonely journey, her aunt sat in the drawing-room waiting for her husband.

Mrs. Brown wore the soft black silk dress and lace cap which suited her years so well. A pleasant, comely woman still, though the silver threads in her hair were numerous, and she was not far from sixty.

She was a little excited just now, for she had news for Sampson. Mrs. Austin's telegram had arrived in his absence, and though Emily Brown in the kindness of her heart had answered it at once with a ready welcome, she was really not a little disturbed by the contents.

"Winnian has to go away. May I send her to you?"

The message was so very vague. Why had Winnian to go away? Was she ill and in

need of change of air? If so, surely it would have been more natural to write fuller particulars than could be conveyed by a telegram?

Mrs. Brown in her heart of hearts hoped she should not have a fashionable young lady thrust on her hands. She had loved her husband's sister very dearly in the years when Mary formed part of her home, and she had rightly attributed her neglect of her own family to the Rector's influence; but on the other hand, she had cordially detested Mr. Austin, and if his daughter took after him she felt she would prove a very uncongenial inmate.

The brougham came up the carriage drive; another moment and Mr. Brown was in the room. Always on returning from business he went straight there to greet his wife. Thirty odd years married, these two were lovers still.

"Well, Milly!"

"Well, Sam!"

And then she put the telegram in his hands with the kindly words,—

"I have answered it already. I felt sure you would not refuse to take in Mary's child."

Mr. Brown read the message deliberately.

"The child must be ill and in need of a change," he said, slowly. "I suppose his High Mightiness, Walter Austin, stood out against her coming to us until the doctor said it was necessary, and then poor Molly telegraphed lest her husband should take back his consent before he had time to write."

"I never thought of that. Winnian is the eldest of them all, isn't she?"

"Yes; the only one we ever saw. She must be eighteen by this time. Well, Milly, I know you'll make her kindly welcome for her mother's sake. As for that stuck-up idiot, the Rector—well, poor girl, she didn't choose her own father!"

Dinner was a substantial meal. After it was over, Mr. Brown smoked a cigar by himself, and then joined his wife in the drawing-room and began the game of cribbage which was their nightly amusement.

"I've been thinking, Sam, we had better have the piano tuned. I daresay she's musical."

Mr. Brown agreed to send down one of the firm's tuners, and also promised a supply of new music; then they became engrossed in the mysteries of "fifteen two, fifteen four," until a knock at the door started them into exclaiming:

"Who can it be at this time?"

"Half-past eight," said Mr. Brown, looking at his watch. "It must be a mistake."

But the neat parlourmaid appeared with a surprised face, and,—

"Please, ma'am, it's Miss Austin," whereupon Mr. and Mrs. Brown hurried into the hall to welcome their unknown niece.

They saw a girl sufficiently like Mary for their hearts to warm to her at once, but yet more beautiful and dignified than their little sister had ever been.

Winnian wore a blue serge dress, shabby to the verge of poverty, but fitting the trim figure to a nicety, while the sailor hat and blue ribbon just suited the wearer.

There was a tremulous eagerness in the violet eyes, and Mrs. Brown fancied she heard the sound of tears in the voice.

"Mother has written," said Winnie; "and please, she hoped you wouldn't mind my coming so soon."

"We are very glad to have you, dear," said Mrs. Brown, gently, feeling there was a mystery she could not fathom just yet. "Will you come and take off your things in my room? Your own will soon be ready, and then you must have something to eat, for you must be tired and hungry."

"I am very hungry," confessed Winnie, "but not at all tired. The journey was so beautiful, I had no time to be tired."

Kind Mrs. Brown thought the girl's life must have been monotonous indeed for her to

call a journey on the London and North-Western Railway beautiful, but she only led the way upstairs.

"Do you know, when I got your mother's telegram I thought you must have been ill and in need of change of air," she said, kindly.

"I have never been ill since I can recollect. But—" she hesitated, "papa is very angry with me, and said I should not stay at home any longer; and mother hoped you would try and find me a situation."

Mrs. Brown opened her eyes.

"Your father would never consent to that."

"Papa has washed his hands of me," said Winnie, simply. "He told me yesterday he had kept me quite long enough."

"My dear child! But how had you vexed him? Surely he could not have been in earnest!"

Winnie put a letter into her aunt's hand.

"Please read it," she whispered. "Mother promised she would explain. And oh! the very sound of it makes me miserable!"

The letter was very short and very simple. Mrs. Austin only wrote that their curate had proposed to Winnian, and that her father very much desired the match; but she (the writer) could not bear to cross the girl's wishes.

Mary concluded by a hope that her brother and sister would forgive her sending Winnian to them, and that they would keep her until she could find a situation.

Mr. Brown was in the dining-room when his wife brought Winnie there, and a very dainty repast had been prepared for the young lady. Her eyes filled with tears as her uncle placed a chair for her.

"Tired, my dear?"

"Oh, no! Only you are so kind! I was rather afraid you might be angry with me for coming, and it is just as though you had invited me; but, oh! how I wish mother was here too!"

"I suppose she cannot leave home?"

"Oh, no! She never has a holiday."

"You are very like her."

"Papa says so," replied Winnie, gravely. "He declares I have not a single trait of the Austins; but, of course, I'm not really like mother. No one could be."

"Is she altered? But, then, how should you know?"

"She is very pretty," said Winnie; "but she is thinner than she used to be, and coughs a good deal. I think Dornington is too cold for her."

"And your father?"

"Papa is just the same, only he gets crosser. Mamma says he is worried. He hates Dornington."

"But he has a curate now," suggested Mr. Brown, who, of course, had not seen his sister's letter, "so he ought to have more leisure."

"Oh, Mr. Carley is indefatigable, and papa likes him very much; but he is ever so rich, and, I think, the contrast between his means and ours makes papa jealous."

"And is Mr. Carley married?"

"No."

"A young man?"

"Oh, no! He is thirty, and quite bald. Mother says he is very good, but all the children detest him, and I always feel bored if I have been talking to him."

"Perhaps you will feel 'bored' here. We are very plain, homely people."

"I don't think so," she smiled at her aunt very prettily; "and then, you know, I shall be busy. I have got to find a situation, and mother said it would take a great deal of looking for."

When their guest had retired for the night, Mr. and Mrs. Brown sat up a full hour later than usual, discussing her.

Of course, her mother's letter was read and considered, and Mr. Austin came in for no small share of blame.

"She's as pretty a girl as you'd wish to see," declared Uncle Sampson; "and there's a great likeness to Mary about her. I am glad she does not take after her father."

"He must be an odious man! Fancy, wanting her to marry for money!"

"Come, Milly, make allowances. Austin has had a desperate fight with poverty. To bring up nine children on two hundred and fifty pounds a year is a task that may well teach a man to value money. Then, you see, this Mr. Carley is eligible in other respects. They must have seen a great deal of him, and know he is a person to be trusted. Then, of course, his being Lord Alleyne's nephew would weigh with Walter Austin."

Mrs. Brown lost her patience.

"You will say next, Sam, I am to send that poor child back to Dornington to-morrow because it is her duty to marry Mr. Carley! I feel ashamed of you!"

Mr. Brown laughed good-temperedly.

"No, no! Keep the little maid here. I don't like her father any better than you do, Milly, but I like to be just, and the prospect of a rich son-in-law must have been an awful temptation to a man so hard up as the Rector of Dornington. I don't suppose he thought Winnie would take him at his word and leave home. Believing she had no place to go to, he fancied the bare threat would force her into submission to his wishes."

"Well, I am glad she came to us."

"So am I. And, Milly, isn't there something about her looks? Not like other girls, I mean?"

"She is a great deal prettier than most!"

"Ay. But I meant her dress. She struck me as being quite shabby, poor little soul."

"I'll see to that," said Mrs. Brown, cheerfully. "I mean to take her into London to-morrow, and have a day's shopping. It will please me as much as it will her."

"And what share am I to have in the pleasure?"

"You may admire the results."

Left alone together the next morning, aunt and niece soon felt at home with each other. Mrs. Brown said frankly, that while Winnian was at Clapham she looked on her as her own child, and as they were going to have a few friends the next day, she thought they had better go into London and make some purchases.

"It is very kind of you, but, indeed, I never thought of such a thing. All I hoped was that you would find me something to do, and let me stay here till then."

"You shall stay here certainly, dear, and we will talk about the something to do later on. I want you to have a pleasant holiday first."

"And," here Winnie blushed, "I have some money. Lord Alleyne gave it to me when I said good-bye to him."

"You must keep it for pocket money, dear."

"But it is ever so much. I never looked at it till this morning, and thought it was a five-pound note, but it is twenty! I thought I would keep out just a few shillings for advertisements, and send the rest to mother."

"Leave the advertisements to me, Winnie."

They bought more things than Miss Austin had ever possessed before. They lunched in Regent Street, and came home just in time for dinner, at which repast Uncle Sam told Winnie that Clapham suited her, for she looked better already.

"By-the-way, Milly, now we have this child we shall be an odd number to-morrow night. Whom shall I bring down to dinner to make the table even?"

"Mr. Lynn!" replied his wife, promptly. Sampson hesitated.

"I like the young man as much as you do, Milly; but it doesn't do to make favourites, and Lynn comes here, as it is, oftener than any of the others."

"But, then, Sampson, he saved your life," replied Mrs. Brown, and the master of the house gave in, as he probably meant to do from the first.

"Aunt Milly, who is Mr. Lynn?" inquired Winnian, when they had been waiting in the drawing-room for Mr. Brown to finish that one cigar which it was his habit to smoke after dinner.

"A great favourite of mine!" replied Mrs. Brown. "He is one of the assistants in our business, and but that my husband's partner has a great dislike to him, he would have risen to quite an important post now. You see, Winnie, your uncle is getting old, and most details of the business are left to Mr. Benton, and, unfortunately, he is very much prejudiced against Oscar Lynn."

"But why? And if it is Uncle Sampson's own shop, can't he do as he likes?"

Mrs. Brown smiled.

"It is not exactly a shop, Winnie, but a musical publisher's. There are over fifty people employed, and, of course, someone must be in authority over them. Mr. Benton takes all the care off your uncle's hands, and, though my husband made a point of Mr. Lynn being employed, he can't insist on his being advanced over the heads of others."

"And what does he do?"

"Oscar Lynn? He is in charge of the ballad counter, and he superintends the arrangements at concerts in the season. He has a hundred and fifty pounds a year, Winnie, and I don't see much chance of his getting any more."

"That's plenty for one young man," remarked Miss Austin, decidedly. "How old is he, and how did he come to save Uncle Sampson's life?"

"Twenty-nine! Some years ago we were at Hastings, and had been out in a pleasure boat. In landing at the pier head your uncle accidentally lost his balance and fell overboard. He must have been drowned had not Mr. Lynn plunged in and saved him at the risk of his own life."

"I don't wonder you are grateful to him," said Winnian, gravely. "Was he in the shop then?"

"No, I will tell you his history, Winnie, because I think you are generous enough not to despise him for his poverty. In those days Oscar was simply a musician in the small band which, during the excursion season, plays on board the steamers. Of course, after the service he had rendered us we could not lose sight of him. We felt that, despite the poverty of his present surroundings, he was a gentleman, one to whom the offer of money would have been an insult. We persuaded him to come and see us at our hotel, and just before we left Hastings your uncle offered him a post in the business. Mr. Benton resented what he called the 'interference with his department,' but your uncle stood firm, and Oscar entered the music room at a salary of a hundred a year. According to the custom of the firm, he has had his salary raised by ten pounds every year; but it has now reached the maximum paid to ordinary assistants, and unless he is given some more responsible post, I see no way of advancement for him."

"And won't Mr. Benton give him such a post? It sounds horrid of him to refuse!"

"My dear child, Richard Benton is an honest, conscientious man, but he is prejudiced and narrow-minded. He will never like Oscar because he entered the business in opposition to his own wishes, and was, as he puts it, a 'mystery.' His argument is that while there are others who have been longer in the business, he has no right to advance Oscar over their heads, and that the fact of his saving Mr. Brown's life ought not to weigh in his favour."

"And is Mr. Lynn sorry?"

Mrs. Brown shook her head.

"My dear, I am very fond of Oscar; but I don't profess to understand him. He performs his duties with admirable exactness, but his head always seems far away. I think myself he must have had some great trouble in his early youth which darkened his whole life. He is handsome, clever, and intellectual. He

has gifts that would make him a favourite in any society, and yet he seems perfectly contented to remain a clerk at a hundred and fifty pounds a year. He makes no friends. He has no ambition for the future. The past he never mentions. He is not a favourite with anyone in the business, and yet, Winnian, apart from his having saved my husband's life. I feel interested in him, and there are times when I think I would do anything in the world just to restore him to hope and happiness."

"Perhaps he was in love with someone very nice—and she died!"

"You are mistaken there, dear. Oscar has never been in love. He confessed as much to me one day when we were discussing early marriages and their improvidence. He declared that if two people loved each other they were justified in being married, however poor their prospects, provided they had the resolution not to run into debt. Then I told him that I had heard of people starting home-keeping on an income as small as his own; and he answered, with a strange smile, that he had never once seen a woman he should care to spend his life with. He is very good-looking. I sometimes fancy Richard Benton snubs him so persistently because he is afraid of the girls falling in love with him; but he need not fear that, Oscar Lynn is not a marrying man."

"Then Mr. Benton has daughters?"

"Half-a-dozen! The two eldest will be here to-night. They are showy, pleasant girls enough, but I rather hope you won't make great friends with them. I have always kept myself from any close intimacy with Mrs. Benton because I do not really like her husband. As a business partner he is invaluable; but in private life I confess he and I do not agree particularly well."

"And who else is coming?"

"We should have been a dozen, all told; but you and Oscar will make fourteen. I shall let him take you into dinner, the Bentons would expire if I gave him one of their girls to escort, and I don't think you will look down on him because he is poor. Then the Vicar and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. Gale, our curate, Mr. Strode, and Algernon Nugent, a young composer whose first pieces your uncle has just brought out. That is all, my dear; but I hope we shall have a pleasant evening. I think your white cashmere will be nice for you to wear, Winnian, and Hall shall bring you some flowers from the garden."

When Miss Austin beheld herself in the soft white robes her aunt had chosen the other day, she decided the children would have liked to see her. The cashmere was embroidered with blue silk forget-me-nots, the square bodice and elbow sleeves were finished with a soft ruche of tulle, and some half-opened white rosebuds at her breast gave a charming finish to her toilet. Her beautiful hair was coiled on the top of her head; and as she glanced in the full-length mirror, Winnie thought she looked very much grown-up indeed, and that the Rev. Mark Carley would certainly have reprieved her for worldliness and vanity if he could only have seen her.

Mrs. Brown came in on her way-down stairs.

"I am glad you are ready, Winnie. I want you to be in the drawing-room when people come in, and then it won't be so formidable as if I had to introduce you to them all at once. I am sure you will like Mrs. Preston, she is a delightful woman, and," here Mrs. Brown sighed, "she knew your mother!"

Winnie was quite disposed to endorse her aunt's opinion when she had been introduced to Mrs. Preston, and saw a face as gentle and expressive as her mother's own. Mrs. Preston assured the girl she remembered her mother perfectly—they were schoolfellows.

"Only I married first and went abroad. Foreign postage was costly in those days, and so I lost touch with many friends. How is Mary? Are you her only child?"



"The only one!" Winnie smiled. "There are nine of us alive, and mother lost three baby girls!"

The Bentons arrived, so did the doctor and his wife, the curate, and a dark, rather melancholy-looking man whom Winnie took for the composer, until, as the last guest entered, Mrs. Brown beckoned the said young man to her, and said,—

"This is my niece, Miss Austin, Oscar, and you are going to take her in to dinner!"

Oscar bowed. Winnie had time to perceive that the composer was fair, plump, and cheerful, and then she found herself going in to dinner with Mr. Lynn, the very last couple before the hostess, who brought up the rear with the Vicar.

Now Winnian had been very much interested in Oscar's history, or rather in as much of it as her aunt could tell her, and she had made up her mind to be very agreeable to him; but he came on her altogether as a surprise. The tall, athletic frame, clearly-cut aristocratic features, and grave, sad face, were so unlike what she had expected, that she had only room for two thoughts. How could Mr. Benton, or anyone else, have the courage to snub this dignified stranger, and how did people ever reconcile it to their minds to see him behind the counter.

"Do you know," he said to her, as soon as they were seated, "although I have been here pretty often, I had no idea until to-night that Mrs. Brown possessed a niece! I suppose you live in the country, Miss Austin, too far off to pay frequent visits?"

"We live at Dornington, a little place beyond Adderley," replied Winnie, "and this is my first visit to Clapham!"

"Dornington! Then I suppose you are the Rector's daughter? I used to have some friends near Dornington, and I remember hearing the clergyman's name was Austin!"

"Yes, that papa's. I wonder if I have ever met your friends, Mr. Lynn? I know almost everyone round about!"

He did not tell her their name or make any further remarks on Dornington, but changed the subject almost abruptly to London and its gaieties.

Winnie shook her head.

"I have never seen any of them. Until I came here, two days ago, I had never been away from home."

"Mrs. Brown is sure to take you to everything worth seeing," he rejoined, cheerfully. "She is the kindest hostess I ever met."

"Isn't she," agreed Winnie. "I feel at home here already. Is it not strange?"

"I don't think so," said Mr. Lynn, smiling, "considering it is the house of your nearest relations. I suppose, though, Clapham is rather a contrast to Dornington?"

"Dornington is very pretty, except the part where the factory is. Near that they have run up a quantity of workmen's houses, and quite spoil the place."

"It must give your father a great deal more to do—unless he has a curate?"

"He has a wonderful one!"

"Wonderful in goodness?"

"I don't think I quite meant that. I suppose, though, Mark Carley is good, but everyone dislikes him!"

"Poor fellow!"

"He is so conceited!"

"I met him once, years ago, on a summer holiday, and—I am afraid I must agree with you, Miss Austin; he had a firm conviction of his own cleverness. But I thought taking Holy Orders would have knocked that out of him!"

"It is his own goodness that he believes in now. I believe he thinks the people are little better than heathens, and he is a missionary sent to convert them."

"Ah, and do they like it?"

"They hate Mr. Carley, but they put up with him because he is the Earl's nephew and everyone loves Lord Alleyn."

"I have heard of him. Mr. Carley is his heir, isn't he?"

"Yes, worse luck. Do you know, Mr. Lynn, it seems almost sacrilege to me to fancy Mark Carley master of that beautiful old place. He isn't a bit worthy of it!"

"Then you think people ought to be worthy of their homes, Miss Austin?"

"Why, of course they ought. And I like them to harmonise, too. Now, there are people in the world one could never associate with anything more picturesque than a big red brick house and a large brass knocker."

Oscar Lynn's eyes involuntarily glanced in the direction of Mr. Benton. Winnian intercepted the look, and they smiled.

"I see what you are thinking of, Miss Austin; but in this case the association would be quite correct. He has the red-brick house, brass knocker and all, and is vastly proud of the same."

"I don't like him!"

"Permit me to observe that if you never saw him till two days ago you—"

She interrupted him.

"I never saw him till to-night. I don't like his face. He looks purse-proud and fussy. He would fidget me to death!"

"I fancy you are a good judge of character," said Oscar Lynn, quietly; "but for all that, he is a very worthy man."

"Must one like all worthy people?"

"I fancy not. Mrs. Benton is very pleasant. I always feel sorry for her."

In the buzz of general conversation this tête-à-tête was perfectly inaudible to any but the two enjoying it; but after this speech there came a lull.

Oscar's attention was claimed by Mrs. Gale, who sat on his other side, and Winnian had time to glance at the lady he "felt sorry for."

A red-faced, prosperous-looking individual, dressed in cinnamon silk, with very tight bracelets on her plump arms.

She seemed happy enough, but a few moments' study of her convinced Miss Austin she stood in mortal dread of her husband, and often stopped herself in the middle of a sentence when she found his eye fixed on her with disapproval.

"Poor creature!" reflected Winnian; perhaps I might have been as nervous as that if I had married Mark Carley. Oh! I do feel glad that Clapham is a hundred miles away from Dornington; but how very strange it is that Mr. Lynn should know Mark, even slightly."

### CHAPTER III.

Mr. Austin was simply furious when he came home and discovered his daughter's flight. He accused his wife of defying him, and, in fact, behaved more like a madman than a "Christian minister"; but Mary Austin, gentle and submissive though she might be usually, for once held her ground.

"You told Winnian you would send her away to-morrow unless she agreed to marry Mr. Carley! I think it was a cruel threat; but, in any case, you should be thankful that she has taken the initiative and spared you the disgrace of turning your own child out of the house!"

"And she has actually gone to your brother Sampson's! A place where she will meet all kinds of undesirable people, and be taught to despise her father and his honest poverty!"

"Sampson and his wife would never teach her to do that. As to undesirable acquaintances, Walter, you told the child you washed your hands of her, and that your house should no longer be her home. I don't think you can complain of her going to any respectable people after that!"

"You are enough to provoke a saint, Mary. What in the world am I to say to Carley when he comes back?"

"I should say nothing. He did not pay you the respect of asking your consent before he spoke to Winnian, therefore you owe him no consideration!"

This idea was very welcome to the aggrieved Rector, but he speedily went off on another injury.

"Lord Alleyn will think I wilfully deceived him, for last night I spoke confidently of Winnian's accepting his nephew. I couldn't tell him a child of mine would be an idiot and refuse such a chance. What in the world am I to say to the Earl?"

"Winnie went to say good-bye to him, so I daresay he understands; but you might call to-morrow and tell him you were mistaken."

"I am never mistaken, Mary. Deceived and defied by a tribe of ungrateful children I may be, but not mistaken; my judgment is too keen."

But in spite of this protest he took his wife's hint, and went up to the Hall early the following morning.

It cost Lord Alleyn a great effort to keep back his indignation when the Rector announced that Winnie had "behaved so atrociously he had banished her from home for some weeks," but the old nobleman possessed plenty of self-control. For Mrs. Austin's sake he kept his temper with her husband, and only said coldly—

"Ah, she told me something of it yesterday. I think a change will do the child a great deal of good. As for Mark, my pretty Winnian was much too good for him. I told you so before, plainly enough, if you remember."

"On the contrary, my lord, you said you would gladly welcome her as your niece."

"So I would! Man alive! can't you understand I am fond of the girl, and I should have been glad to think that some day she would be mistress here? But for the rest, Mark is not half good enough for her. He is very like a frog in temperament, and Winnian ought to marry a man of spirit."

"She will probably marry a counter-jumper, seeing her mother has sent her to stay with a shopkeeper."

"Shall I tell you my opinion, Austin? You don't deserve your wife and children. They are far too good for you."

"I would far rather only have had my desserts in the matter of children," returned the Rector, bitterly. "What does a poor man like me want with nine children?"

"They are all children to be proud of; and if Mrs. Austin's brother is like herself, I should be delighted to make his acquaintance, shopkeeper or not."

"Of course, Winnian has made her choice, and must abide by it," said the Rector, sullenly. "She must put up with what society she meets at her uncle's house. I won't have her back here to annoy your nephew."

"I rather fancy my nephew can take care of himself," said the Earl, calmly. "Since the day my physicians told him I could not live two years at the longest, Mark's filial attentions have suddenly ceased. What need to be attentive to an old man when in such a short time he will come into his heritage?"

"It may not be so bad as that," said the Rector, in a softened tone. "While there is life there is hope."

"I do not wish it otherwise," said the Earl, gently. "Austin, in spite of several little misunderstandings, we have been close friends, you and I. I don't mind telling you that my heart broke seven years ago."

"When Lord Carley died?"

"When I searched his papers after his death to arrange his affairs and discovered that he, not Niel, had been the sinner. My younger son was extravagant and reckless, nothing more. His brother, with a malice terrible to think of, had so managed that his own evil deeds should be laid at Niel's door. I had sent my youngest-born from me in anger. I had suffered my favourite son to leave me for a distant land without one word of farewell. He was drowned on his voyage out, and too late I discovered I had been deceived by his brother's treachery. Can you wonder I am ready, nay, willing, to yield up the burden of life?"

"It was an awful blow."

"Ay, it broke my heart. Austin, Mark is in character and disposition almost poor

Carley's double. Can you wonder that, knowing how my own son deceived me, I doubt his cousin?"

"They were friends."

"Ay, Niel and Mark never got on, though they were nearly of an age. My boy took a solemn oath when he left me, he would never return to Dornington until his name was cleared. Little did I think within a few months he would be lying dead beneath the trackless ocean. Austin, I believe with all my heart that Mark knew of the treachery practised on me, and that Carley paid him to hold his tongue."

"Impossible."

"I may wrong him, but I think not. If I am correct, just think the kind of man to whom you wished to consign Winnian, and be thankful she had more discrimination of character than yourself."

"I think sometimes," said the Rector, in a strangely humbled tone, "that poverty has warped my whole nature. I never used to think so much of money."

"And yet," said the Earl gravely, "the worst of poverty's stings have never fallen on you. You have never lacked anything really necessary, and your wife has borne the larger half of every burden."

"But Mary has no pride; she does not mind. And then think of the children. The two eldest boys are fourteen and fifteen. They must be launched in the world soon, and how is it to be done?"

"I am an old man," said Lord Alleyn, gently, "and, as you know, my days are numbered. Your pride will perhaps bear from me what I know it would judge an insult from another."

"I—I don't understand!"

"Only this, my friend. I have left a thousand a year to each of your children; the interest will educate the girls, and the principal, perhaps, smooth their way to matrimony. The boys can spend their capital on their start in life. For years past, Austin, your children and their mother have been my greatest interest in life; but for a dread of wounding your pride, I would have helped them long ago. As it is, you may, perhaps, take from a dead hand what you would scorn from a living man."

The Rector went home in a strangely subdued frame of mind. His wife was astonished when she saw his softened face and heard his voice in a gentler key than usual.

"What does Lord Alleyn say, Walter?"

She had followed him into the study, and now he shut the door on them both.

"He says, Mary, I don't deserve either you or the children, and he seems to think Winnian has had a very merciful escape from Mark Carley. His opinion of my curate is not a high one!"

"Then you will forgive Winnie?"

"Yes, but Mary, she had better stay where she is if your relations like to keep her for a month or two. It would make things awkward all round if she had to meet Carley daily after rejecting him. And, wife, I have strange news for you. Lord Alleyn means to leave the children a thousand pounds apiece, so the future looks clearer."

Mrs. Austin's eyes filled with tears as she listened to the story of Lord Carley's treachery and Niel's innocence.

"I must write and tell Winnie."

"What on earth for? She was a mere child when the young men died!"

"She was eleven at the time of poor Carley's funeral; but I have another reason for telling her. Winnie always declares she believes Niel is still alive!"

Down went the corners of the Rector's mouth.

"Very foolish of her. Why, the sailors discovered on the raft declared positively all the passengers were drowned."

Mary Austin looked unusually grave.

"But if you remember, Walter, they knew nothing of Niel personally. They met the

Earl in London, and he rewarded them handsomely, but they could tell him nothing whatever of his son."

"My dear, what are you driving at? If all the passengers were drowned, of course Niel Carley was drowned too."

"If he sailed in the Golden Fleece—yes."

"No one ever doubted his sailing. His name was in the passenger list; besides, my dear, if he had survived he would have communicated with his father in these eight years. He must have heard of his brother's death, and have known he was the heir."

"I should have said the same yesterday; but, Walter, Lord Alleyn told you Niel's last words were an oath that he would never return to his home until his name was cleared in his father's eyes. He may have heard of his brother's death, and yet not have a suspicion that the Earl knew how unjust were the charges brought against him."

A long pause. For once in his life the Rector of Dornington felt inclined to take a suggestion from his wife.

"It would be cruel to rouse the doubt in the Earl's mind unless we had something certain to tell him," said Mr. Austin, gravely; "but, Mary, I fancy there is something in your theory after all."

"And I am sure of it," breathed his wife; "and, Walter, I believe Mark knows it."

"Mary, don't make that poor fellow out quite a villain because Winnian does not fancy him. I have heard you call him a 'good young man'; why do you change your mind?"

She hesitated.

"I thought he must be good because he worked so hard, and never took any pleasure; but, Walter, I never liked him. Over and over again I have reproached myself for the feeling, but I could not like Mark Carley. I used to think if Winnie married him the feeling would wear off, and, seeing her happy, I should become attached to him in time."

"Well, his affection for Winnian is disinterested, whatever other faults he has. He can't be mercenary in seeking to marry a penniless girl!"

"No."

"And look here, Mary, how are we to move in this? Here is Niel Carley supposed for over seven years to be lying in the Atlantic. How are we to start the idea he is alive without bringing on ourselves a cloud of ridicule, besides disturbing Lord Alleyn's last days with a cruel suspense!"

"I think you might speak to Mr. Clinton!"

"Clinton has hated me like the pestilence for months, though I never could make out why. He is a very decent fellow for a lawyer."

"He is a gentleman!" said Mary, simply, "and I think he has not got on with you lately, because you have been so infatuated with Mark Carley, whom I admit he does really hate!"

Mr. Austin called on the lawyer a few days later, and was astonished at his reception, and the news he heard. As soon as Mr. Clinton grasped the fact that his visitor had not come on Mark Carley's behalf, but was influenced solely by a desire to bring an unlooked-for joy to Lord Alleyn's last days, he thawed at once and talked in the most cordial fashion.

"As a fact, Mr. Austin, I have known from the very first that Niel Carley did not sail in the Golden Fleece. I have had letters from him written since the foundering of that vessel, and I possess an address at which he may be heard of!"

The Rector almost started from his chair.

"And you kept this from the Earl. You actually allowed that poor old man to believe himself childless?"

"Gently, Mr. Austin. As it happened, I had no choice in the matter. I was bound over by a most solemn oath not to reveal Niel's existence to his father unless I was able to prove his innocence. My efforts failed to do

this, I felt the firmest faith in him. I could have staked my professional reputation on his being wrongly accused, but I had no proof."

"Lord Alleyn has had proofs," said the Rector, solemnly. "He told me only yesterday how cruelly Niel had been wronged. The real culprit was Lord Carley."

"Assisted by his cousin Mark, I have a shrewd suspicion," said Mr. Clinton. "Let me tell you, sir, in spite of his cloth, your son-in-law elect is no very respectable character. He may have repented, but there are some very dark pages in his past."

"He will never be my son-in-law!" said the Rector, with a guilty feeling that his daughter had been clearer sighted than himself. "There was some talk of it, but young ladies have a will of their own nowadays, and so he was rejected. I know you don't like my curate, Clinton; but he was disappointed in proposing to a penniless girl, the eldest of a family of nine."

Mr. Clinton smiled.

"Mark Carley is probably in his uncle's confidence. I must not betray secrets, Mr. Austin; but your daughter is a great favourite with Lord Alleyn. It is hardly likely he would allow her to be a penniless bride."

"He means to leave my children a thousand pounds apiece. He told me so himself."

"Your younger children—Miss Austin has a very different legacy. She will be quite an heiress in a small way. You had better guard her from fortune-hunters, sir!"

"And when can you find Niel?" demanded the Rector, with a hasty sigh at the thought that Winnian might even now be receiving the attentions of her uncle's shopmen. "In his father's state of health no time should be lost."

"I will write to-night, but I believe he does not often call at the place where he told me to address letters. All I know is that sooner or later all communications sent there reach him."

"Would it not be better to go instead of writing?"

"I tried that once. The place is a stationer's and library in a very quiet district. The proprietor told me he had not the slightest idea of his customer's private address, and that sometimes he did not see him for weeks together."

#### CHAPTER IV. AND LAST.

Winnian felt as though the world must be coming to an end when she received a letter from her father, which was not only peaceful, but almost affectionate in its tone.

With a due regard to his own dignity the Rector did not actually acknowledge he had been in the wrong. He said, however, that since his daughter seemed to have a positive aversion to Mr. Carley, he had informed the curate he must not hope to be his son-in-law; and that, as it would be awkward for them to meet just at present he should be glad if Winnian remained away from Dornington at least a month.

"I am not at liberty to speak plainly," wrote Mr. Austin; "but it is possible that there may come a great change in Dornington society which would probably necessitate Mr. Carley's leaving me; and if this came to pass it would be just as well that you should not return home until he had actually departed. Still, you need not consider yourself under disgrace any longer, and no doubt when we meet again all will be satisfactorily explained."

What the "all" represented was Greek to Winnian, but she realised that her father meant to be amicable; and though his anger mattered very little to her at a distance, still, for the sake of those at home, she rejoiced, and gave herself up with a free heart to the delights of her new life.

In a month she was as much at home at The Firs as though she had been there for years. She had grown to understand the vast difference between the extensive musical



publishing firm and a "shop," and had come to the conclusion that her "uncle in trade," was as true a gentleman as anyone she had ever met.

As for her uncle and aunt, they were delighted with Winnian. She seemed to fill a vacant place in their hearts which had surely been waiting for her all these years.

Mrs. Brown found her the pleasantest of companions. The master of the house loved her almost as a child of his own, and both dreaded the day when the Rector of Dornington should recall his daughter.

"I don't see why Mr. Austin should not give Winnie up to us entirely," said Aunt Emily, one evening when she was alone with her husband after Winnian had said good night; "he has eight other children!"

"How long do you suppose you would keep her?" asked Uncle Sampson, with a twinkle in his eye. "Don't you suppose, Milly, that that there will be other young men besides that precious curate at Dornington ready to find out how pretty she is. It's my belief, wife, the mischief's done already, and you'll have to eat humble pie enough when you confess to Mary and the Rector what you've let their daughter do."

"Sampson!" and poor Mrs. Brown looked alarmed, "what do you mean?"

"My dear Milly, has it never struck you that Oscar Lynn haunts this house? He used to be the most punctilious of young men; never would come without a written invitation. Well, in the last month he must have been here a dozen times, and I am quite sure he does not come to see me!"

"Sampson!"

"Don't look so horrified, Milly. He's a fine young fellow enough, and though he has not a large income, if he marries my niece, even Benton can't object to my advancing him in the business. It's true his antecedents are mysterious; but he is a gentleman, and an honest one. Only, wife, I pity you when you have to inform the Rector of Dornington that his daughter is in love with a shopman—that's how his reverence would describe Oscar."

"Perhaps she doesn't care for him. And you know, Sam, you may be mistaken."

"I don't claim to be infallible, like the Pope; but on this point I'm right. I'd bet you anything you like, Milly. I don't say that Oscar will propose to Winnian, for he is desperately proud; but that he is in love with her, and that she cares for him, I am certain."

"What in the world shall I do?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, helplessly. "Mr. Austin will be furious!"

Her husband smiled.

"My dear, do nothing. If Oscar has the courage to propose to Winnie in spite of his poverty, and she is brave enough to accept him, I think I can manage to improve his position so that the Rector need not quite faint at the idea of having him for a son-in-law. We are rich, Milly, and there's no one particular that we need to save for. If we like to spend a few thousands in smoothing this young couple's road to matrimony, why shouldn't we?"

Mrs. Brown hesitated.

"It seems so strange. I have always wished Oscar would fall in love. His is such a terribly lonely life; and yet I never thought of his caring for our Winnie. What will the Bentons say?"

"That it is a judgment on us for introducing unknown young men into the business; but, perhaps, they may not have to say anything. Oscar Lynn is proud enough to bury his secret in his own heart, and never propose to Winnian at all."

The next day Mrs. Brown was alone in the drawing-room when her protégé was shown in. Coming so close upon last night's conversation, she might have concluded his visit concerned Winnie; but, wife-like, she jumped to the idea that an accident had happened to her husband, and Mr. Lynn, as the clerk best known to her, had been sent to break the news.

"Oh! Oscar, what is the matter? Is Mr. Brown killed?"

Oscar took her hand, and pressed it in both of his.

"There is nothing in the world the matter with your husband, dear Mrs. Brown; I saw him the moment before I left Regent Street. He has most kindly given me a holiday. I told him I wanted a few days to attend to private affairs."

She looked into his face, and marvelled she could ever have fancied him the bearer of bad news. Why, his eyes positively sparkled with hope!

"I am quite sure something very delightful has happened, Oscar! Won't you tell me what it is?"

"You have been so good to me," he said, simply. "You took me on trust, and never asked a simple question. For years I have been under a cloud, Mrs. Brown. I was accused of a crime I never did. In a fit of pique I swore I would never go home until my innocence was proved. I let my poor old father believe me dead, just for my oath's sake!"

"And now the truth is clear?"

He bowed his head.

"I had quite despaired of it. The guilty person died years ago, and I always believed he carried his secret to the grave. To-day, by a strange chance, I found I was mistaken. My father knows my innocence; only, believing me dead, he would not proclaim my brother's treachery. I am going home to-day to see him; but I felt I must come here first. Mrs. Brown, don't you understand? I love your niece. My new happiness is nothing to me unless she will share it!"

"I know that Winnian likes you," confessed the aunt; "but I fear you will have a hard battle with her father."

"I knew Mr. Austin intimately once. My father and he are close friends. I have no fear of the Rector's consent. What I am anxious about is Winnie's."

Mrs. Brown smiled.

"Do you know why she came here? Poor child! To avoid a would-be husband? But, dear, you may be more successful than Mr. Carley. Winnie is in the garden; ask her."

And there, beneath the spreading mulberry tree, Winnian Austin listened to her second offer of marriage, and said "Yes."

Oscar told her nothing of his great news. He let her imagine that he was just the needy assistant he had seemed. He told her plainly that he loved her—that with her beside him poverty would be sweet.

"We have been poor always," said the girl, gently. "I am not a bit afraid, if only you are sure your love will last, and that you will not get tired."

He smiled.

"I think my love has lasted long enough for you to trust it, Winnie."

"But you have known me such a little while. Only a month!"

"I have known you for years. When you were a tiny child, and I a great rough school-boy, I was always your friend and protector. When you were my mother's petted plaything she always called you my little wife. Two years after, Winnie, when I went out into the world, a dark shadow on my name, I always hoped that if that shadow were lifted I might return to you. I have wandered through the world, dear, and suffered many hardships; but two beings were always enshrined in my tenderest memory, the thought of my mother and that of my child-sweetheart. When I came into your aunt's drawing-room the night of your first dinner party, I recognised you at once, though I could not understand how you came to be at Clapham!"

Winnian looked up into his face.

"You are Niel! Do you know, I told mother I would not believe you were dead. I used to say you were alive somewhere on a desert island."

"Then you did not quite forget me?"

"I never forgot you. I believe why I hated Mark Carley so bitterly was that he had usurped your place."

"Mark must have known I was alive," said Niel, thoughtfully, "at least, he knew I did not sail in the Golden Fleece."

"And you are going home? How glad your father will be. But, Niel, he is very ill!"

"I know, sweetheart," said Niel, soberly.

"I have telegraphed to your father begging him to break the truth to the Earl, and I go down by the six o'clock train. Winnie, may I tell my father that you are going to be his daughter?"

Not very long after his cousin's return to Dornington the Rev. Mark Carley left England on a missionary enterprise to the heathen in Central Africa. It is believed he never got there, but, gaining the affections of a colonial-heiress on the voyage, married her and retired from exercising his sacred profession.

This was the report which reached Dornington; but nobody there felt sufficient interest in the Rev. Mark to test the accuracy of it.

Niel (Viscount Carley) and Winnian were married in September. Of course, the bride's father performed the ceremony, and Lord Alleyns gave her away.

The Rector never in so many words apologized to his daughter for his unkindness; but he has entirely forgotten their late differences, and always assures people that Winnian is his favourite child.

Lady Carley never questions the statement; but, though she welcomes the Rector warmly and studies his tastes when he visits her, the deepest affection of her heart is reserved for her mother and the children.

Worshipped by her husband, and indulged in all things by the old Earl, the pretty Viscountess may be said to enjoy as much of her own way as often falls to the lot of mortals, and she does not always trouble herself to ascertain whether her doings are cordially approved of by the Rector of Dornington.

For instance, she never consulted him before she invited her uncle and aunt from Clapham on a long visit; and she asked Mrs. Brown to be godmother to her little daughter, though Mr. Austin considered it a fatal mistake.

But in all things essential she was a kindly, dutiful daughter, and she rejoiced with all her heart when, through Niel's influence, Mr. Austin was appointed dean of an important cathedral.

An ample income, a deanery fit for a palace, the best society in a cathedral city, and plenty of people to admire him and bow to his opinions, the post just suited Mr. Austin.

He lost his bitter, cynical spirit, his fidgety, cross-grained ways, and before he had enjoyed his new dignity a year, had ripened into such a genial, hospitable man that no one would have believed he had ever yielded to such fits of rage as the one which caused WINNIE'S FLIGHT!

[THE END.]

SHE would not, though I coaxed and teased, And begged of her my bride to be.

She said she'd marry whom she pleased,

Yet—goodness knows—she pleased me.

HE COULDN'T TELL A LIE.—It is an unusual wit which enables its possessor to be as funny in speech as he is on paper. The author of "The Mikado" is evidently ready at any moment to thrust or parody. Once, in leaving a large reception, he stood in the hall, waiting for a servant to bring him his coat and hat. As he lingered there a "heavy swell" descended the stairs, took him for a servant, and called out to him: "Call me a four-wheeler!" Mr. Gilbert put his glass in his eye, looked blandly at the young man, and said: "You are a four-wheeler." "What do you mean?" cried the other. "You told me to call you a four-wheeler, and I have done so. I really couldn't call you handsome (handsome), you know!"

## A MILLIONAIRE'S VANITY

### SHORT STORY.

**N**O, sir! not a shilling will I pay! When I engaged to have my portrait taken I expected a likeness and not a caricature." These were the words, spoken in a loud and angry tone, which met my ear as I ascended the narrow stairs to the studio of my friend Fellows. Passing the open door on my way to his private room, I caught a glimpse of a portly and red-faced gentleman, and a sallow over-dressed lady, standing before an easel on which Fellows was exhibiting a canvas, while a little apart was a young girl, in appearance so pretty, modest and ladylike that I wondered if she could belong to these people.

From the adjoining room, with only a portiere veiling the door between, I caught snatches of the conversation.

"This picture, Mr. Dobbin," said Fellows, with emphasis, as he tapped his maul-stick on the frame, "is one of the most realistic likenesses that I have ever produced. If you remember, it was your own particular request that every line of your face should be exactly copied, without any softening—or, as you expressed it, without any fancy touches—even to the wart on the eyelid, which I confess does impart a certain character to the face. No photographic impression could be more exact, I appeal to Mrs. Dobbin for her opinion."

"Well, ahem! There is a likeness, but the portrait ought to be better looking than this. Seems to me the lips are too red, and the eyes—well, there's something wrong about them also. In fact, it isn't nearly so good-looking as it was at first. Is it, Ida?"

"Indeed, mamma," came in a sweet and half-timid voice; "I think it more exactly like papa than at first. If papa had allowed Mr. Fellows to finish it in his own way—I mean to soften it a little, as he did mine—"

The voice died away in a murmur, but the next was sufficiently audible.

"You know nothing about it, Ida. I want no softening and flattered likeness myself, but to look just as I do every day, to my family and friends. But who ever saw me with a dab of red in the corners of my eyes, or a black snuff-smirch under my nose, or one-half my face like a negro's while the other half is all daubed up with blotches of light pink—as here—and here, sir! Why, one would fancy that I had just recovered from small-pox."

Through the slightly-parted curtain I could see Mr. Dobbin, purple now with indignation, as he pointed his gold-headed cane toward the easel, while the artist in vain endeavoured to explain about "effect," light and shade, and "tone" of colour. The irate Dobbin would scarce listen, and Mrs. Dobbin stared helplessly, as at a lecturer in Greek or some other to her unknown language. Only the girl listened intelligently.

"If I am to take this picture, sir," finally remarked Mr. Dobbin, "I must insist upon being represented with my natural complexion—the face of the same colour throughout—and that these vermilion dabs and white spots in the eyes be removed; also the black stains from beneath the nose and chin which I myself never observed there."

"Then, Mr. Dobbin, I must decline to do anything farther to the picture. No artist who values his reputation would allow a production such as you describe to pass from his hands and under his name. The portrait is completed. You can take it or not, as you please."

There were a few angry words from Mr. Dobbin, ending with, "Not a shilling, sir! not a shilling!" as he stamped out of the room, followed by his wife and daughter. I saw the

face of the latter as she passed out—her cheek flushed as with shame, and her pretty blue eyes, glistening with tears, raised in half-timid appeal to those of the artist who held open the door for her. Then Fellows came into the room where I was, and, with an expression of intense disgust, banged the unlucky portrait down on the floor against the wall.

"You heard all that?" he said, savagely; "and now, after all my time and labour lost, what am I to do with this beastly thing?"

"Sue him, if he won't pay."

"Can't: I was fool enough to agree to his stipulation that should he not consider the picture a good likeness he was not to take it."

"Who is he?"

"Dobbin—the mill-owner. Richest man in the country. Began life as a miller's man himself, and now resides in that stone palace that you see from the window on that rising ground. By-the-by, isn't it a shame that that lovely and refined girl should be his daughter?"

"There's no accounting for the freaks of nature."

"Nor of fortune. Now, as it happens, there's a love affair between herself and young Horton—you know the Hortons?—the aristocrats of the town—where four generations of them have lived as mayors, legislators and colonels. They're down now, poor and proud, and would as soon think of setting up their son in the butcher business as consenting to his marriage with an upstart Dobbin."

"I should think that their wealth would be some inducement."

"They would be glad enough of that if old Dobbin had the slightest claim to be considered of even 'genteel' family. And he on his part would give half his fortune to be able to establish such a claim. He hasn't been long here, not above a year or so, and in this ridiculously exclusive little town not even his wealth secures him a place in the upper crust of the social pie. His daughter is sometimes invited, but not her parents. Poor thing! It is touching to see her and her lover—a good fellow, but rather weak of will, I fancy—exchanging glances, and sometimes a furtive clasp of the hand as they come out of church on Sunday nights."

Then we both gazed at the portrait.

"What will you do with it?" I questioned.

"Give it to my landlady for a fire screen."

"You can do better. Make it into a Dutch alehouse 'boor'—pewter mug and all. It would require little work to transform it."

"I might do that," he answered, looking critically at the picture, "but such subjects don't take. Let me see; I might soften and idealise it somewhat, and make it into a Dutch cavalier, or an English cavalier, for that matter. A hat and plume to shade and soften the face; a Vandyke beard and collar, and hand on sword-hilt—yes, I think it would do; and I know of a fellow who would take it off my hands for something less than it may be worth."

Next day when I called to bid him good-bye—for I was only on a visit to the place—I found Fellows whistling "Nancy Lee" as he worked briskly away at Dobbin's portrait. He had wonderfully transformed it, though, with even this, a general likeness to the original remained, in the rugged lines of the face, the pompous manner and haughty stare.

"There!" said Fellows, as he laid aside his palette and turned the canvas to the wall to dry, "that will do for the present. Stay! I must wipe out this name on the back, 'Seth Dobbin, Sen.' What a name! His wife requested me to 'write it in paint,' in order that with future generations there may be no mistake as to the identity of the portrait."

He carelessly daubed over the name with his brush, in short, upright strokes, and replaced the picture as before.

It was just six months after this that

in passing along the streets of a city, not fifty miles from B—, I stepped into an art dealer's to look at a collection of "works of art, curios, and bric-a-brac," offered for sale. I had scarcely entered when my attention was attracted by a voice which it seemed I had somewhere before heard.

"Why, bless my soul! I think I do see a likeness—at least, to my father; and my mother always declared me to be his image."

I glanced around and beheld Mr. Dobbin, accompanied by his wife and daughter; the latter looking paler and, as I thought, sadder than when I had last seen her. They were examining a picture in which at a glance I recognised the well-remembered Cavalier of my friend Fellows.

"I assure you, Seth," said Mrs. Dobbin, earnestly, "it is a wonderful likeness! Why, look at the eyes, and the nose, and the mouth—and everything! They're exactly like yours, with just a little difference of some sort. I can't tell what. And it's somehow like all your family. Really, it's quite remarkable, isn't it, Ida? Pray, sir," turning to the proprietor, "whose portrait is this?"

"That, madam, is a Vandyke, recently brought from England by our foreign collector. Unfortunately, it is not known who was the original, but you can see at a glance that it is the portrait of a cavalier of King Charles' time, and must therefore be nearly three centuries old. In those terrible wars many castles of the nobility were destroyed by Cromwell and his Roundheads, and family portraits, plate and other valuables were forever lost to the owners. Such was doubtless the case with this fine work of the great Vandyke."

He was looking at the picture with an air of admiring criticism, and I turned away to laugh. I detected at once that the canvas had been subjected to a careful process of smoking and discoloration to impart an appearance of age.

"My father was an Englishman from Yorkshire," remarked Dobbin, "and if the picture were not as old as you say, I could almost believe this to be his portrait; it is so like."

"It may be the portrait of an ancestor of yours," suggested the man, suavely, as he turned the picture to place it in a more favourable light. In so doing he exposed the back of the canvas.

"There seems to be writing, or an inscription of some sort, there," Dobbin said, with aroused interest. "Can you make it out?"

"Let's see. Here is a capital S and a D." "S and D! Why, those are my own initials," said Dobbin, excitedly. "And, as I live, here is an 'o'—Do. Really, this is singular."

"Quite remarkable, indeed! May I inquire the name, sir? Ah, Dobbin. Here, sir, do you not perceive this b and a y and an n?"

"But that isn't the way we spell our name. D-o-b-b-i-n. That's it."

"But you lose sight of the fact that in the course of centuries family names have greatly changed. For instance, in those illiterate old time, 'y' was always used for our modern 'i.' This inscription is, I think, undoubtedly Dobyn."

Then there was an eager and excited scrutiny, the result of which was the interesting discovery that, as the dealer assured Mr. Dobbin, the inscription in the picture stood as follows: "Sir-D'Obyne, Kt."—the initial of the Christian name being undecipherable.

Mr. and Mrs. Dobbin were clearly greatly excited over this discovery; the disinterested proprietor asserting that such an extraordinary array of coincidences as the name, the family likeness, and the fact that Dobbin's ancestors having been English, could not possibly be accidental. This was undoubtedly the portrait of some noble ancestor of Mr. Dobbin, which a providential fortune had thus restored to its legitimate owners. However, it could all be easily traced out and proved by a gentleman whose address he gave, belonging to the college of heraldry; and he was disinterested enough to allow this valuable Vandyke to be purchased by Mr. Dobbin



at the ridiculously low sum of two hundred pounds. I am convinced that the delighted mill-owner would unhesitatingly have given ten times that amount.

When I again saw Fellows I related to him the whole affair as I had witnessed it. He at first stared and then broke into immoderate laughter.

"That explains the whole matter," he exclaimed, when sufficiently recovered to speak. "It was reported that old Dobbin had received from distant and, until then, unknown relatives in England the portrait of some noble ancestor, with a heraldic chart proving his descent from a certain Norman baron of the name of D'Aubigne D'Obyne and Dobbin—accompanied by a family crest and coat of arms. Well, though the thing was strange, there was no reason for doubting it under the circumstances and with such proofs, and the result was that the Hortons, finding they could not hold a candle to the Dobbinses, withdrew their opposition to the match between their son and the heiress. The young people were married about two months since, and among other costly gifts bestowed by papa Dobbin were an elegant carriage and a superb set of silver, both emblazoned with the ancestral crest. Whether he will change his name for that of the historical D'Aubignes does not yet appear, but at least a more pompous and self-satisfied personage you never beheld. And it all came of my picture, which in the beginning he refused to pay for." And Fellows went off into another fit of laughter.

We have heard since that an heir had been born to young Horton and his wife—a fine boy, who, by his maternal grandfather's own desire, was pompously christened at church by the name of D'Aubigne. And now the Dobbinses are at the very top of the most exclusive social circle of G—, while the Hortons, who boast no family crest or ancestral portraits centuries old, are compelled to be content with an inferior rank.

#### FATHER AND DAUGHTER

The love of a daughter for a father! What a sight for the gods it is! writes Max O'Rell. Look at that girl on her father's knees, with her arm around his neck, fondling him, petting him, patting his face, curling his moustache. Look at them in the street, arm-in-arm, like old "pals!" In that girl's company he is a man of twenty-five, not a year older. Watch them flatten their noses against the shop windows, looking at all the pretty things inside. But they do not remain long outside. Sure, they go in; the little rogue knows her business. She knows that papa is always ready to cheerfully part with his loose cash. She gives him a nudge, a little wink; they laugh, and in they go. And what a time they are having discussing over the choice of all the things they are going to have! When they return home they get scolded for their extravagance; but that's all right. Mamma is not a bit jealous. Besides, have they not bought something for her? Of course they have! The whole day that daughter watches the opportunity to do her father a thousand good little turns. If he takes a cigar she rushes for a light, and strikes it herself; if he only mentions that he has forgotten something upstairs, off she goes to fetch it. She seems to foresee all his wishes, and satisfies them before they are expressed. She looks at him, smiles at him, makes love to him. When evening comes she chats to him, tells him stories, plays to him, sings all his favourite songs, and the hours fly joyfully till it is time to go to bed. Then she kisses him good-night once, twice, three times, and goes, but soon the door opens again and she re-appears to say good-night once more; then, singing, with a quick step, she rushes upstairs, leaving papa sighing at the thought that he will not see his eyes on that dear, lovely little face again till next morning at breakfast. Blessed be the man that possesses such a daughter! His lot is the most enviable one in the world.

## Facetiae

"WELL, there may be such a thing as a whisky trust," said an old guzzler, "but I never was fortunate enough to come across one."

"AUNT BETSY, do you enjoy good health?" "Indeed I does, missis, when I has it, but dere's precious little ob it goin' at dis 'ere time."

"WHAT do you expect to be when you become of age, my little man?" asked the visitor. "Twenty-one, sir," was the bright one's reply.

DISCONTENTED ARTIST: "I wish I had a fortune, I would never paint again." Generous Brother Brush: "By Jove! old man, I wish I had one! I'd give it to you!"

"ARE Mrs. West's entertainments very exclusive?" "Well, I should say so; she intends to make application to have the conversation of her guests copyrighted!"

It is hard enough, any way, for a bachelor to hold a baby, but it is simple torture when it is the baby of the girl who jilted him heartlessly only three years before.

PARSON: "I'm sorry to find your employer has been playing golf on Sunday." Caddie: "He wasn't playing golf." Parson: "Ah, then I have been mistaken." Caddie: "Yes! He has been trying."

HE (bitterly): "Your answer would be different if I were rich enough to shower you with golden sovereigns." She: "It might be different, possibly, if you should cover me so completely that I couldn't see."

"Now, by St. Paul!" exclaimed the tragedian playing "Richard III." "Buy St. Paul!" said the Stock Exchange Man in the audience. "Not while there's a shilling break in the market. I'll stick to Lackawana."

A TRAMP read a sign—"Fireworks"—in a store window, and sneeringly said: "Fire works, does it? Hah! It's a big fool then. I haven't worked in eighteen years, and I look a blame sight healthier'n that old sign does now."

A PARTICULAR old gentleman, pulling something out of his soup that should not have been included among the other ingredients, thus addressed his cook: "Josephine, I am much obliged for your thoughtfulness, but next time kindly give it to me in a pocket."

WHY SHE WANTS TO VOTE.—Mrs. Homespun: "I declare I would just like to be able to vote once." Mr. Homespun: "Why, my dear, I thought you were strongly opposed to woman suffrage." "So I am; and I would like to vote in order that I might vote against the horrid thing."

HIS BIG ADVANTAGE.—"Yes, sir," he said, proudly. "I began life a bare-footed boy, and see where I am now." "Yes; you are well up; but you had a big advantage at the start." "How so?" "You began your life a bare-footed boy. The rest of us began as bare-footed babies."

"It is strange," said a lady at a boarding-house breakfast table, "that people can tell the age of animals by the teeth." "Not at all," said an old gentleman. "I can tell a chicken's age that way." "Why!" exclaimed the lady. "A chicken hasn't any teeth!" To this the old gentleman testily replied, "Madam, I know that a chicken hasn't any teeth, but I have."

A GOOD story is told of a wedding in a Methodist church whereat a prominent divine who was to officiate, finding himself and congregation in the church considerably in advance of the bridal party, finally asked that someone should strike up a hymn to improve the time. A good brother started off, just as the bridal party entered the church, with the hymn beginning "Come on, my partners in distress!"

"THIS necktie," said the salesman, "speaks for itself." "Speaks for itself?" repeated the customer, as he took in the loudness of the design; "I say that it positively yells!"

EMPLOYER (to clerk): "This is disgraceful, Jones; here am I at the office first!" Clerk (deferentially): "Yes, sir, I have always been taught to give precedence to my superiors!"

"WHEN a young man is in love," said Uncle Eben, "don't blame him if he's kind o' hard to get along wif. He can't help habbin' de idea dat anyone who kin win de 'fections of sech a fine lady must be sumpin' great."

HE DOESN'T SMOKE.—Mrs. Flysparrow (to new acquaintance): "You seem to be an inveterate lover of the weed, Mr. Nicotine. May I ask if your father smokes?" Mr. Nicotine: "I trust not, madam. He has been dead some time."

"DID youse git anything?" whispered the burglar on guard as his pal emerged from the window. "Naw, de bloke wot lives here is a lawyer," replied the other in disgust. "Dat's hard luck," replied the first; "did youse lose anything?"

FLANAGAN: "Hivins, man, phwat's the matter wid yer face?" Hanagan: "Faith, 'twas an accident. The ould woman throwed a plate at me." Flanagan: "An' d'ye call that an accident?" Hanagan: "Av coorse! Didn't she hit phwat she aimed at?"

The steamer rolled and pitched in the waves. "Deah boy," groaned Cholly, at the end of the first hour on shipboard, "promise me you will send my remains home to my people!" A second hour passed. "Deah boy," feebly moaned Cholly, "you needn't send my remains home, there won't be any."

VISITOR: "You don't mean to tell me that that fellow back there is John Bascomb's son? Why, I can remember when he was considered the brightest, most promising fellow in town." Superintendent: "Yes, so he was; but, you see, he got to spending his time reading those magazine articles on 'How to Succeed.'"

JUST THE DIFFERENCE.—Gubbins, in one of the rare moments he devotes to the cultivation of his intellect, was reading aloud from a work on natural history. "The camel is an animal that can work a week without drinking." "And I," remarked Gubbins, commenting upon the text. "I am an animal that can drink a week without working."

"MAMMA," inquired Bobby, "do only good little boys go up to Heaven?" "Yes, dear." "And bad little boys to the bad place?" "Yes." "I'm a good little boy, ain't I?" "Sometimes, Bobby, and sometimes you are quite a bad little boy." Bobby thought for a moment and said: "Then I s'pose I have to spend part of the time in one place and part of the time in the other."

ONE morning the minister gravely observed to the girl: "Jessie, I hope you say your prayers every night." "Ay, I doe that, sir! Last night I prayed for you an' the meestress." "Indeed, Jessie; why?" queried the reverend gentleman. Jessie, without hesitation, responded, while pointing contemptuously to the ping-pong appliances: "Sir, when I see you an' the meestress sea far left tae yerseles as tae play at that nonsense, I'm thinking that ye bairn sair need prayin' for!"

FOND MOTHER: "Now, look here, George! I want you to break off with that girl. She is very pretty and all that; but I know her too well to want you to risk your life and happiness by marrying her. Why, she knows no more about housekeeping than I do about Greek—not a bit." George: "Perhaps not; but she can learn." Mother: "After marriage is rather late for that, George." George: "But you said yourself that you did not know a thing about housekeeping until after you were married." Mother: "Very true, George—and your poor father died of dyspepsia twenty years ago."

# HER MISTAKE

By EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS.

Author of "The Flower of Fate," "Woman Against Woman," etc., etc.

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Sir William Carruthers has married a second time a woman of means, but lacking that unconscious refinement and indefinable something that money can never give. She has a daughter, Brenda Grant, and it is early apparent that the introduction of this young lady into the household at Thickthorn bodes no good for the beautiful and sympathetic Hope Carruthers, Sir William's daughter by his first wife. On the day the story opens a young man has met with a serious accident in the hunting field. A stranger, he is brought to Thickthorn, and before the night is out is in the throes of delirium tremens. The Earl of Hampshire dies suddenly, and by his will his fortune goes to Hope Carruthers. Hugh Christie, hearing of Hope's good luck, decides at once to ask her to be his wife. Philip Leicester, the stranger, is making slow progress towards recovery, and finds much solace and comfort in Hope's society. Meanwhile preparations are going forward for the marriage, and Hugh Christie is as dutiful as a lover should be. Brenda Grant, disappointed at Hugh proposing to Hope, has left Thickthorn, and her absence really bodes no good for the happiness of the heroine.

## CHAPTER XV.

**LADY ANNE CHRISTIE** was a very observant woman, and it was easy for her to discern that something was very wrong in her son's household.

As far as was possible to one so cold-blooded, and apparently devoid of all things womanly and tender, Lady Anne had succumbed to Hope's sweetness, and apart from this feeling of liking for her daughter-in-law, Hugh's mother resented anything like scandal or gossip busying itself about the menage in Cadogan Square.

"It is that abominable Grant woman who is at the bottom of all this. I summed her up pretty clearly the first time we met. Of course, she always intended to marry Hugh, and then afterwards, when she found her ridiculous pursuit of old Gainsborough was absolutely useless, she reverted to Hugh, and has amused herself by making as much mischief as was possible. That child, of course, was no match for such a woman," Lady Anne said to herself, irritably. "But Hugh ought to be ashamed of himself; and, good heavens! if he must flirt, why not choose some woman of his own class as a suitable person? This Brenda Grant has neither beauty nor breeding, and her money cannot be much of an attraction to a man who is already settled in life."

Lady Anne frowned as she thought this. Not even to herself would she allow the confession of Hugh's untrustworthiness in the question of money. Heart and human kindness might be but small ingredients in the formation of her character, but pride and honesty were as strong in Lady Anne's bosom as they had ever been.

The good that might have been cultivated and encouraged in her had been crushed and stamped out through her married life.

Erio Christie, her husband, had been a man possessed of great charm of manner and appearance, but a man who regarded the world as his oyster—a man without principle, heart, or conscience, who had caused his wife as much suffering as falls to the lot of most women. And now, when she was grown almost callous, and certainly hardened, she saw that Hugh, her only child, the one thing in all her married life that had the power to reach her heart, was following fast in his father's footsteps, and would die as his father had done before him, disowned by his friends, distrusted by all who knew him, unregretted and soon forgotten.

The season was well begun, and festivity was the order of the day, as Lady Anne sat musing over the trouble that she saw looming above Hope's head. She went as frequently

as she could to the house; she figuratively took Hope by the hand, and as far as lay in her power she administered some severe snubs to Brenda.

Brenda only laughed at Lady Anne. She was enjoying herself immensely. At last she had the satisfaction of feeling that Hope was entirely at her mercy, that she had set her foot upon the girl's most tender and holy of feelings, and that at every turn she could increase her mental suffering.

She did not quite understand Hope in these days. The girl had vanished, the woman had come in her place; Brenda had known what to expect from the girl, but with Hope the woman it was a different thing.

On one point only was Brenda quite sure, and that was that her presence in the house was little less than torture to Hope.

She had anticipated at first that there would be a quarrel, and that the outcome of that would have been a request from Hope that she should go.

She was almost disappointed when she found that Hope had no intention of quarrelling, and that no such request was made to her. She would have liked to break through the veneer and treat Hope to some of the spite that was in her heart.

As far as Hugh was concerned, Brenda had no feeling in the matter save one of triumphant vanity, in that she had the power to do what she liked with Hope's husband.

It had been a bitter blow to her when it was suddenly announced that Lord Gainsborough had determined to take a trip to Australia for the benefit of his health. With this departure her utopian scheme of marrying the wonderful old statesman vanished into thin air; and, partly from anger, partly from disappointment, and greatly for the desire of punishing Hope, she allowed the semi-flirtation between Hugh and herself to increase and ripen.

After all she was not growing younger. She had cared for Hugh Christie more than she had ever cared for another human being, and she would have been more than mortal had she not felt soothed (bearing in mind her nature and character) at the assiduous attention Hugh paid to her.

She had a shrewd idea that it was for more than herself that Hugh sought her society so much.

A shrewd, keen woman of business, Brenda had not been at the house more than a month before she became aware that to Hope's great trouble the question of monetary difficulties would shortly be added.

She had gathered from Hugh the exact position, and she laughed contemptuously to herself over Hope's infatuation and folly in having signed away the whole of her capital to her husband's control.

"If he squared his old debts he has run up others twice as big again," Brenda said to herself. "People cannot live as Hugh Christie is living on the income Hope is supposed to have."

She went on her way content. Well, if there was to be a crash she would be there to see it for herself. She had lately seen that there was a new cloud on Hope's face, and she speculated on what it could arise from.

"She lives as simply as a peasant. She can have no debts, surely! It must be something to do with him."

Hope's latest trouble was the demand from Marthe, the Parisian dressmaker, for payment of her bill. Since her recent and acute sorrow Hope had almost forgotten this debt, and the demand came at an inopportune moment.

Any other and more worldly woman would have put the letter on one side and dismissed

it from her mind for a time, but Hope's one desire was to sit down there and then and send a cheque for the amount.

She felt grieved that she had not done so long ago. She had worn the dresses, and they should have been paid for. Now, to her dismay and annoyance, far from being able to write this cheque for two hundred pounds, she found, on consulting her bank book, that she had barely enough to pay the household expenses for the past month.

She had drawn very largely on her resources of late. Six months before she would have gone as a child to her husband and consulted him on all business matters. But with the barrier that had risen between them, standing like a grey wall even before her, Hope had to fall back upon herself for counsel and advice; and, acting on her own innate honesty and scruples, the girl went on her way, owing no man anything, and winning for herself a reputation that was as pure and untarnished as her husband's was shady and unsatisfactory.

She knew nothing of his dealings with her money at Christmas time. He had given her a good sum to place at her bank, and informed her that it was for the housekeeping expenses, and that she must be clever and make it go as far as she could.

This Hope had taken in her own sense, not in his. Debt was the atmosphere in which Hugh had lived, and he had imagined that Hope would manipulate things in the same fashion as himself, that is, paying small sums on account, only when it was absolutely imperative the same must be paid.

In his imagination, therefore, when he thought on the subject at all, he credited Hope with having a goodly sum at her disposal, and that he need not trouble about her or her expenditure for a long while to come. She could always dress with Marthe, and what she did not get from Paris she could obtain from some of the smart London shops.

Such was his arrangement as far as Hope was concerned. For himself, such time as he could spare for business was devoted to watching the progress of the new "Change-boom" in which he had invested the greater part of Hope's capital, and in following the career of Nimstrat, the favorite for the Derby, who stood to bring him in a few thousands if he fulfilled the promise of his form.

It was with considerable anger, therefore, that Hugh received one morning a little pencil note from Hope, asking him to kindly come to her boudoir, and speak to her on the subject of money.

The husband and wife, although living in the same house, were virtually separated. They never met save in the presence of Brenda or others, and Hope had grown almost used to the miserable farce of good fellowship between them that had succeeded the suerres on his side and the eager lovingness on hers.

Hugh was not pleasant in his anger. His manner, his voice, his whole bearing sent a thousand new pains through her heart. Silently, at his desire, Hope produced her household books and her books of daily expenditure.

"Good heavens! What awful extravagance! How on earth do you think we are going to live at this rate? Why, you have not thirty pounds left in the bank!"

"The expenses are very heavy," Hope said, in a low voice, not trembling or nervous as it would have been, but quiet and cold.

"I should think so," Hugh assented, with a disagreeable laugh, "as you arrange things. I see I must take the management of affairs into my own hands. A woman of any ordinary capabilities would have made the sum I gave you at Christmas last through the season."

Hope's lip quivered, but only for a moment. "We can reduce the expenses at once!" she said, in the same quiet way.

"And live like paupers! No, thank you!" Hope was silent a moment.

"Then what do you propose?" she asked. "I propose a little common sense and





"I HATE LONDON! I HATE IT!" SAID HOPE, PASSIONATELY. "I NEVER WANT TO SEE IT AGAIN."

worldly wisdom. With your credit and the reputation of your money, we should have gone on swimmingly for a year, if not two, without bother."

Hugh closed the books impatiently, and lit a cigarette.

He was wonderfully handsome as he stood with his back to the fire, and his hands under his coat-tails.

Hope did not look at him; the effort to be cool and steady in his presence tried her almost beyond her strength. It was such a mockery in her eyes, that fine handsome face, those soft, brown eyes, that delightful charm of manner! All false—false as life and happiness itself!

"To live honestly one must pay one's debts," she said, in a low voice.

"Live honestly!" Hugh laughed again. "You talk like a fool, Hope!"

She lifted her eyes to his for a moment. "Is to be honest to be a fool, then?" she asked, quickly.

"Bah!" Hugh shook off the ashes of his cigarette. "Do, for Heaven's sake, Hope, drop this methodical manner of yours—honesty, purity, and goodness knows what else beside. I thought I had married a reasonable girl, not a ranting, preaching revivalist!"

"And I," said Hope, with dignity, rearing her head, "imagined, unfortunately, it seems, that I had married a man of honour and integrity." She looked across at him. "But we need discuss the matter no further. In future I will not trouble you about money matters. Mr. Withers will attend to them for me. I have nothing more to say."

"But I have," cried Hugh, lapsing for a moment into anger, "and that is, that I do not intend to be dictated to by you, Hope, either now or in the future. I am your husband and your master, and it is for you to obey, not command. You will certainly not approach Withers on the subject of your money, because I forbid you to do so. More-

over, you would have your trouble for nothing, for Withers can do nothing in the matter without consulting me and getting my consent. You yourself chose me as guardian of your fortune, and you must abide by the consequences. When you can point to any dishonourable act of mine in connection with your affairs, I trust you will not hesitate to do so."

Hope was very pale; her limbs trembled beneath her with emotion.

"You are cruel—you are unjust!" she said, brokenly, and the tears gathered in her eyes.

Hugh shrugged his shoulders with a resigned air.

"Please say all you have to say, and get it over," he said, languidly. "I see you are determined to have a row."

Hope paused for a moment. Then, with the tears trickling down her cheeks, she looked at him in silence for a moment; then, gathering her books together, she turned and left the room.

"She has the most cursed temper of any woman I ever knew," Hugh said, savagely, to himself.

It seemed as if fate had selected this morning to annoy him. As he reached the hall he met his mother coming in, and he saw by her face that she had nothing very pleasant to say.

"You must give me five minutes, Hugh," Lady Anne said, coldly, as he greeted her. "I have something of importance I must discuss with you."

Lady Anne's mission was soon explained.

"You are making a scandal," she said, when she had endeavoured to show him that Brenda Grant's presence in the house must be dispensed with. "The whole affair is regrettable, vulgar, and foolish. Miss Grant must leave here at once!"

Hugh laughed at this. His mother had no power over him whatever. He was in no humour to listen to any reasoning from her to-day.

"Brenda Grant is the only woman who has the least sympathy for me. Am I to give up a good friendship because a lot of chattering busybodies choose to gossip about us?"

Lady Anne found that she was doing no good, but she did not relinquish all intention of defeating Brenda. The present moment was inopportune, but she would revert to the subject later.

She left her son and went upstairs to Hope's room. The girl's pale, wan face touched her sharply.

"Why do you sit indoors so much? It is not good for you," she said, reprovingly.

Hope made no answer at first. She was suffering still from the effects of her interview with Hugh. Suddenly she turned to his mother and held out her hands.

"Help me what to do," she said, brokenly.

"You are older than me, you are clever, you are wise. Oh! help me now. I want to put an end to all this unhappiness. If you only knew what torture this life is to me. I feel I have lost him, yet I do not know what I have done. I only loved him with all my heart and soul, and now—"

Lady Anne felt a mist come over her fine eyes.

"My dear," she said, quietly, putting her hand on Hope's shoulder, "this is not brave. Women are born to suffer, at least, such women as you. You have everything to learn. Alas! that it should be so. You were a child, a baby, when you became Hugh's wife. For one year you have lived in ignorance and unhappiness; it is longer than is given to some. Now you must rouse yourself. You must face facts. You must realise that Hugh is no god, no hero, no knight, only an ordinary man of the world, selfish, and cruel in his selfishness. You must not sit down and weep. All the tears in the world will not cure the trouble. You must brace yourself up and go into the battle, as it were, proudly, courageously. There is pride in your heart, Hope. Call upon it now; let it fill your every nerve. Stand up-

right and show your husband that if he has scorned your love, trodden your best and purest feelings in the dust, that you have risen superior to that to him, and that you are determined to take your proper place in the world as his wife and the mother of his child. Hugh is one of those men who must be forced to yield by a power superior to themselves. You have already that power. Use it at once, and use it well!"

#### CHAPTER XVI.

"Hot!" said Dr. Gunter, as he strode along the dusty lanes, with his white linen coat flying and his white, green-lined umbrella carried well over his head. "Why it's hot enough to roast a Salamander."

"I don't feel it very much!" Philip said, laughing lightly.

"Um! You are a Salamander yourself," grunted Dr. Gunter.

Philip laughed again.

"I can certainly stand a goodish bit of heat; but I don't mind it out here. It's heat in a big city that beats me."

"How much farther is it to this confounded stream? Lord! what fools these mortals be, as if we should have a single haul to-day!"

"Would you like to sit down here while I go and fetch a fly?" asked Philip, his blue eyes full of mischief for the moment.

Dr. Gunter almost hurled his umbrella at the speaker.

"How dare you! You are altogether too impudent for words, Mr. Overseer or Manager or whatever you call yourself!"

"Let us turn here; it is a short cut!" Philip observed, in reply to this.

He had pulled his broad-brimmed straw hat well over his eyes, and had his hands plunged into the pockets of his summer coat. He was looking straight ahead of him now.

"What's that on in front? More fools like ourselves trying to get sunstroke?"

"I think," Philip hesitated, as if in doubt as to what he saw, while the pulses of his heart throbbed with a sudden passion, and he felt a thrill run through him at sight of the slender, white-robed figure coming slowly towards them, walking beside a low carriage drawn by a smooth, sleek donkey. "I think it must be Mrs. Christie!"

Dr. Gunter gave a snort, significant of annoyance, and quickened his pace.

"Saints and sinners!" he exclaimed. "Does she want to kill herself?"

Philip strode on beside the doctor in silence. As they drew nearer he could see Hope's lovely face smiling down at the baby, seated comfortably on the nurse's knee. How lovely she was, how sweet and pure she looked, clad in her thin, white garments.

"Fairy!" shouted Dr. Gunter, when within speaking distance. "How dare you! how dare you! Do you want to kill yourself and your baby, too?"

Hope smiled back at him, her eyes looking like two great violets.

"Do you really call this hot?" she asked, with a touch of her old girlish manner. "Why, it is only just warm!"

"Only just fiddlesticks!" Dr. Gunter cried, irascibly. "It's awful! It's simply awful! Hottest day I ever remember. I am roasted, literally roasted!"

Hope laughed as she shook hands with them both. When she laughed she looked almost her old self; but Philip, who had studied her every line, every expression, every trait, was shocked at the change in her.

He had known he was to see her soon. She had been expected at Blairton all the past week. He had schooled himself for the meeting, and now it was come he went through with it as though it was the most ordinary and indifferent thing in the world to him, as though this slender, pale, violet-eyed woman—for woman she was now—with the traces of deep mental pain in her delicate face, was no more to him than a stone in the road.

Dr. Gunter's seething and loudly-expressed protestations were a relief to Philip at this

moment. He liked to see Hope's sad lips curl into a smile, and a little colour creep into her cheeks, as she defended herself against Gunnie's attack.

He saw that she was listless, weary, miserable, and that this effort to joke and laugh with her old friend was in itself almost beyond her.

"Going to walk to Meckrington!" shouted Dr. Gunter; then he looked about him in mock solemnity of manner, much to the amusement of the small groom in the Hampshire livery, who stood at the donkey's head.

"Philip, I think you shall go for that fly you spoke of to convey this—this lunatic to the nearest asylum!"

"I used to walk much farther than that in the old days, Gunnie!" Hope said, wistfully.

The doctor bent forward, and kissed her tenderly.

"In the old days, my fairy, you had only yourself to think of, and now here you have a bouncing baby to be remembered."

Hope's little hand went out to the soft face of the child.

"Doesn't he look well?" she asked, changing the conversation quickly; then she looked at Philip. "You must come and talk to Douglas now and then, Mr. Leicester; he will soon get to know you, he is so quick and bright!"

Philip had given a start as she spoke the child's name.

"Douglas! you—you call him Douglas!" he said, when he spoke.

"Yes, it is a nice name. I like it. Lord Gainsborough chose it. He is baby's godfather, you know, and he asked if he might choose the name. Of course, I agreed," Hope said. "I like Lord Gainsborough; he is so kind to me, and so my little son was christened Douglas William Hugh. The second name after my dear father, the third after his own."

Philip stood looking down at the child. It was a very pretty baby, with eyes like its mother's, and a small, delicate face, and it was called Douglas. A sudden emotion moved the man as the small cavalcade withdrew by Dr. Gunter's orders under the shade of a neighbouring clump of trees. Philip took the little atom of humanity in his arms. A great rush of tenderness welled up in his heart for this tiny being, Hope's first child, the heart of her heart.

"He will grow to love me, perhaps!" he said, almost involuntarily. "I will be a faithful friend to him as long as I live. He will love me, perhaps, some day."

He had the child pillowed on his arm, and the little head nestled confidently on his shoulder.

"He will love you—he must!" Hope said, a mist of tears coming unconsciously over her eyes. Her fingers had been holding her baby's tiny ones. Now she let them fall till they rested on Philip's strong, sun-bronzed hand. "It is a pleasant thought!" she said, in a low voice that went to his very heart, "that my boy should have such a friend as you will be, Mr. Leicester!"

"Come and sit down here, fairy. You must rest for half-an-hour, and then we will escort you back to Blairton; and if you please, nurse," here Dr. Gunter looked kindly at the rosy-cheeked denizen of Blairton, "Mrs. Christie will take your seat in the carriage, and you will walk in her place. Now I have spoken," said Dr. Gunter, authoritatively, "and there is nothing more to be said on the question. Is there, nurse?"

"No, sir!" the young woman replied eagerly. "I am glad you make Mrs. Christie ride, sir. I wanted her to!"

"Yes, yes. We knew all about Mrs. Christie and her insubordination."

Here Dr. Gunter frowned darkly at Hope, who laughed outright, a faint echo of the laugh that used to come so easily at Thickthorn.

She sat down obediently on the grass, and

leaned her head against the broad trunk of the tree beneath which they were gathered.

Dr. Gunter was busy fanning himself with his broad-brimmed straw hat. Then he began questioning Hope about herself—when she came, why she had not come sooner, and many other things.

The nurse and the groom had wandered on a little, and Philip had gone for a stroll under the trees, still holding baby Douglas in his arms.

"Where is he?" inquired Dr. Gunter, abruptly, when they were quite alone.

Hope's pale face flashed for a moment. "My husband is in Scotland!"

Dr. Gunter's face wore an expression that was seldom there.

"What are you going to do?"

"I shall stay with grandmamma. She needs me, and likes to have me with her."

"Um! Peculiar taste," said the old doctor, shortly. Then he looked at her suddenly, sharply. "And you. Shall you be content to stay here? Will you not want to go back to London life and all its frivolities?"

"Never, never!" Hope answered, passionately. She was very pale, now pale to her lips. Memories of all the miseries that had been crammed into the past months returned in full force. "Oh! Gunnie," she said, brokenly, "if you could only know the peace, the rest, the comfort it is to be here. I hate London, I hate it!" she cried, almost wildly.

"I shall be glad if I might never enter it again."

"And you have sacrificed every penny of your money to meet this crisis?" Dr. Gunter said, after a moment's pause.

"I have settled the just debts and liabilities," was Hope's reply. "Surely there is nothing wonderful in that, Gunnie?"

The doctor did not answer immediately.

It was not easy to speak when his heart was seething with fury against Hugh Christie. He had to curb his tongue when with Hope. He had given it free licence when he was with Philip.

"And what of that creature?" he asked, after a pause. "Is it true she is to be married?"

"I believe so," Hope said, wearily; "but I know nothing about Brenda's movements beyond the fact that she is at Thickthorn, and that is why I am here!"

"Well, well!" Dr. Gunter said, gruffly. "Let us leave disagreeable topics alone. You have had enough of them, my poor little fairy. All you must do to please me—and you do care to please old Gunnie, I know—is to take great care of yourself, to eat and drink well, let the fresh air into your lungs, and not over-exert yourself. Get some occupation, child. Fretting never did anyone any good in this wide world. You can't live your yesterday again, my fairy! Vestigia nulla retrorsum, as we say in Latin. Look to the future, my little one. There is always sunshine and happiness for such as you!" and then Dr. Gunter jumped to his feet. "I will just go and have a look after Philip and that son of yours," he said.

He longed to take her in his arms, and let her weep out her sorrow there. But he was wise and gentle at heart for all his rough ways, and he knew that to speak to Hope now, when the wound was so sore, the pain so bitter, was to do no good, only to increase her difficulties.

Philip had relinquished the baby to his nurse, and was strolling along by himself as the doctor came up.

"He is an infernal scoundrel, a blackguard, a villain!" said the old gentleman, furiously, blowing his nose violently. "Gone off gallivanting to Scotland, enjoying himself like a king, and leaves her, having robbed her of every penny, and broke the sweetest heart that ever lived in woman's breast, to face the world and live her life as best she can—a wife with no husband, a mother with no protector for her child! I thought him a bit selfish and feeble," Dr. Gunter said, as he put his handkerchief in his pocket; "but, by Heaven, sir,



I swear it, if I had thought for one moment he would have treated her in the way he has done I would have shot him dead sooner than he should have married her, and that's the honest truth, Leicester."

Philip made no answer. What could he say? He had scarcely permitted himself to analyse his feelings as regarded Hope and her miserable marriage. A man's natural anger and disgust for Hugh Christie and his dishonourable conduct was deepened and intensified into something like mania did he allow himself to dwell on the subject. He had followed Hope's career from a distance all the months past.

Meckington was a far cry from the drawing-rooms of Belgrave and Mayfair, but scandal and gossip somehow found a vent through which to meander far and wide, carrying their sorry tale as they went.

The world's tongue had wagged freely of the doings of Hugh Christie and his beautiful young wife; and it was not long before Philip heard how Captain Christie was plunging recklessly on the Turf and the Stock Exchange, how almost immediate disaster threatened himself and his wife; and how the establishment in Cadogan Square would have to come to an untimely end.

The scandal of Hugh's extraordinary infatuation for Brenda Grant; then of his wilder excesses when Miss Grant's forthcoming marriage with the old Marquis of Woodstock was announced to the world, had all crept to Philip's ears.

And now—the blow had fallen. Hope's fortune, or what remained of it, had been sacrificed, even to the last penny, to settle all that was owing; and Hope herself had come to make her home with her grandmother, Lady Hampshire, leaving her husband free to pursue his own course as he willed. The world was not astonished at this, rather did it approve of the separation.

"His little wife was always a deuced sight too good for Christie," one of his associates said of him, and this sentiment was echoed by all the world.

Hope had sincere sympathy and pity given her, and it was generally known that, in consequence of the conduct of his kinsman, Lord Gainsborough openly declared he would never speak to him again.

Pity and sympathy were all very well to some natures, but to Hope they were but aggravations of her sorrow. Her proud spirit shrank from such pity, and, save in the case of her most intimate and tried friends, she did not care for the sympathy. The blow that had been struck at her young heart and life was not one to be erased by such means. She had nothing to help her but time and proud, silent patience.

"Let me root him out of my heart, let me learn to despise him. Oh! it is weak, it is contemptible, to cling to a man when he has despised me and thrown my love back in my face!"

This was Hope's constant thought as she sat alone brooding over her position. The loss of her money, the loss of her place in the world, even the smart of the world's pity, and the remembrance of Brenda's vulgar cruelty could not give a quarter the pain that this thought brought.

If she could only forget him. If she were only strong enough to turn her back on the past and shut the door on all contained in it, life might then hold something for her. Joy and happiness could never be hers again; but there was peace and contentment, and the sense of ministering to others that might be hers in all their sweetness could she but conquer her heart; and, remembering Hugh in all his selfishness, all his baseness, put her foot on the remnant of her love and crush it to death beneath her tread.

Hope was not an ordinary woman in this respect. She had loved with all the bright faith and infatuation of youth. She had made of her husband a hero. She had blinded her

eyes to his glaring faults; she had been deaf to the voice of wisdom.

It was not possible to such a nature to teach herself utter forgetfulness all at once. Not even when the hideous truth was known to her that he had never loved her, that his kisses and words had been false, his whole life a lie, her money, and not she herself, being his goal and his desire. No, not even with this knowledge could she teach herself to hate where she had loved, to despise what she had treasured and revered, to cast on the ground beneath her feet that which she had garnered in her holiest of holies for nearly two years past.

She fell into the habit of forgetting all this bitter knowledge and reverting to the first days of her short happiness.

She would remember some word of praise, some caress given, perhaps all carelessly, some pleasant hour she had spent with the man who had accepted her exquisite love with a sort of sublime indifference, and derived some amusement from it whilst its freshness lasted, but who had flung it on one side when tired with as little remorse as he would have felt had he kicked a dog that stood in his path.

There needed some even stronger blow than those which had fallen to shatter the chain that linked Hope's tender thoughts to her dead past—some thrust more direct, more subtle and quick, to reach her heart at once, and end the dream for ever.

"She is breaking her heart for him, miserable coward that he is!" Dr. Gunter said, as he and Philip, foregoing their fishing expedition, walked with Hope and her attendants to Blairton, and then retraced their steps to Meckington, after having refreshed and rested themselves in the quaint old Castle. "Why is it that the best women always waste their loves and lives on blackguards?"

"They worship an ideal," Philip said, gently. "They see no flaw. It is their own pure hearts and imaginations that give them that constancy and satisfaction which we find so difficult to understand."

"You should have been a poet," Dr. Gunter said, as they walked on; and then, quite involuntarily, he spoke a thought that had framed itself in his mind. "Why could not you have married my fairy. She would have been happy with you, Philip! For you would have valued her, and been good to her!"

They had reached the gate of the little cottage which was Philip's domicile during the summer months, and where Dr. Gunter had come to stay for a few weeks; and, with his hand on the latch, the young man turned and looked at his friend, then, without a word, pushed open the gate and walked steadily up the path.

Dr. Gunter took out his handkerchief and rubbed his face, then furlled his umbrella and tucked it under his arm.

"Heaven bless me!" he said to himself, in half-a-dozen keys. "Heaven bless me, what a contemptible dolt and fool I am! Why did I not think of this—I, who pride myself on seeing through a brick wall as far as most people?" He let the gate clang behind him and walked on mechanically; and as he went through the old-fashioned garden his eyes travelled to where Philip stood bending over his excited dogs, and his rough face softened. "Poor lad!" he said, tenderly, to himself. "Poor lad!"

(To be continued next week.)

This story commenced in No. 2,049. Back numbers can be obtained through all Newsagents.

IN NEED OF A CHANGE.—"What makes Mrs. Smith so energetic lately? I met her at seven this morning hurrying through the street, and saw her going home in a cab at midnight yesterday." "Oh, she's worrying her dressmaker and hurrying her milliner. You see, she is going south for the benefit of her health."

## Underground Bonfires

Near Wolverhampton there is a huge underground fire which has been burning fiercely for over twenty years. The process of combustion is going on every day in the human body. Every human body has its internal "fire." When the digestion is wrong and the liver out of order, an overpowering sensation of heat is often felt. Loss of appetite, a hot aching head, debility, loss of ambition, and sleeplessness are also plain signs that the liver and stomach are out of order. The best remedy is Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. Mrs. Henry Wood, of 18, Saunders Street, Stockbridge, Edinburgh, gives powerful proof of their merit. Speaking to an Edinburgh reporter, she said: "In November last I had a very bad bilious attack, and my liver was quite out of order. Prior to that my health had been excellent. On taking to bed I thought I should be all right in a day or two. Days passed, however, and I grew weaker and weaker, and eventually I became so bad that I consulted three doctors, who said I was suffering from liver complaint induced by bloodlessness. I had terrible sick headaches, could neither sleep nor eat. I carefully followed the doctors' instructions, but to no purpose. Then I tried Bile Beans. I derived so much benefit that I persevered, and, after having given myself a thorough course, I was completely cured." Chas. Forde's Bile Beans are a certain cure for indigestion, biliousness, "summer-end fog," liver and kidney disorder, sleeplessness, headache, constipation, drowsiness, anaemia, female ailments, pimples, and all blood impurities. Of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Beans Manufacturing Co., 119, London Wall, London, E.C., for one and three half-pence or two and nine.

## Gems

To know the worst is one way whereby to better it.

Loneliness is a small thing for anyone to complain of in a world like this.

Faith is the better of the free air, and of the sharp winter storm in the face.

A man's good breeding is the best security against another man's bad manners.

Truth will give up her treasures to you when you give up your prejudices to her.

That is the best gift of love which will in some way be helpful to the persons receiving it.

When a great man dies, for years the light he leaves behind him shines on the paths of men.

Wherever affection can spring, it is like the green leaf and the blossom—pure and breathing purity, whatever soil it may grow in.

A woman cannot redeem a man; she can but indicate where redemption lies. The spark of illumination is in the man; all women can do is to kindle it.

It is astonishing how soon the whole conscience begins to unravel if a single stitch drops. One single wrong indulged in makes a hole you could put your head through.

Discontent is the want of self-reliance; it is infinity of will. Regret calamities if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend to your own work and already the evil begins to be repaired.

NEVER RAISE HER.—Doctor: "I congratulate you, sir. You are the father of a fine girl." Subbubs: "Oh, my! We'll never raise her." Doctor: "Tut, tut! Why do you say that?" Subbubs: "It seems utterly impossible to keep a girl here more than a week."

# ROSALIND'S VOW

## CHAPTER XXII.

**W**HEN Captain Marchant returned to the drawing-room of "The Towers" he found his hostess sitting in front of the fire with bent brows and tightly-compressed lips, strongly suggestive of ill-temper.

Mr. Barnes-Smith, meanwhile, had retired to the window, where he was industriously engaged in paring his nails.

"I must make a thousand apologies," murmured the officer, with his suavest bow and smile. "I had a rather important question to ask the lady who has just gone out—"

"I hope she gave you a favourable answer!" interrupted Mrs. Barnes-Smith, with what was intended to be biting sarcasm. "I hope, also, that you did not allow any thought of your impoliteness to me to interfere with the length of your conversation."

"Impoliteness, my dear madam!" exclaimed Marchant, raising his brows in deprecating surprise. Then, with a deeply-injured air, he added, "I thought you knew me too well to believe it possible that I could ever be guilty of impoliteness towards you!"

"Humph!" was all the observation the lady vouchsafed to this delicate compliment.

Mr. Barnes-Smith turned round, favouring Marchant with a wink and a broad grin. It was not altogether unpleasant to him to see another man treated to a little of the acidity that was so frequently vented on himself.

Mr. Smith—he had taken his wife's patronymic of "Barnes" at her request—had thought to a very great stroke of luck when Fortune threw in his way a widow with five thousand a year of unencumbered estate. He had celebrated his engagement with champagne, and all his friends had envied him. But things had not turned out exactly as he wished. Five thousand a year is all very fine, but so long as it remains in your wife's hands, and you are doled out an allowance of two pounds ten shillings per week, it is difficult to estimate it at its rightful value. Even that two pounds ten shillings was accompanied with grumbling, and rather vinegary reminders that husbands don't usually come to their wives for pocket money!

Altogether, Mr. Smith was of opinion that he had been far better off when he was a bachelor, drawing the modest salary of two hundred a year from an insurance office!

Captain Fulke Marchant, as we have seen before, was not wanting in diplomatic acilities, and now he felt they were to be put very strongly to the test. He drew a chair close to that of his hostess, and leaned down confidentially.

"The truth is, I was astonished at the impudence of—of the person who has just left," he said, in a carefully-lowered tone. "Of course, it matters little to me whether she tries to get into families under false pretences, so long as those families don't include intimate friends of my own; but I followed her out to warn her against attempting to enter this family. I told her that though I might hold my tongue so long as she confined her attention to people of whom I knew nothing, yet when it came to duping you—" he paused expressively, thereby intimating that language failed to express the enormity of such an offence.

"Ah!" exclaimed the lady, eagerly. "Then she is an adventuress?"

"An adventuress of the most pronounced type!" unblushingly responded the Captain.

"There, Adolphus!" tried Mrs. Smith triumphantly to her husband. "You hear what Captain Marchant says? And you said you were sure a woman with such a face must have a nature to match. A nice judge of character you are! Now I flatter myself that I can see as far through a stone wall as most people, and the first moment I saw her I

thought the creature as bold, stuck up a piece of goods as I had ever set eyes on!"

"You always have the same opinion of women younger and better-looking than yourself!" muttered Mr. Smith, sotto voce; but he was too sagacious to give audible utterance to this sentiment.

Captain Marchant filled up the pause that ensued, and produced a couple of cards from his pocket-book.

"I have kept my promise, Mrs. Barnes-Smith, and procured you tickets for Lady De Courcy's 'At Home,' and for Mrs. Howard-Howard's dance next week. Both ladies are most anxious to make your acquaintance—and that of your husband."

The husband grinned incredulously. The wife seized the cards and gazed at them with unconcealed delight. It was the dream of her life to enter the great world of fashion, and Captain Marchant's ability to get her admission to a few good houses, whose doors would otherwise have been closed to her, had received a very substantial acknowledgment in the shape of loans.

But in spite of her pleasure at the prospect of making Lady de Courcy's and Mrs. Howard-Howard's acquaintance, Mrs. Barnes-Smith was not on this occasion inclined to forget prudence; and when Captain Marchant delicately approached the real object of his visit, and asked her if she could lend him a hundred pounds on a note-of-hand—at whatever interest she chose to name—she reminded him that the interest on the last two loans had not yet been paid; and while regretting that she could not oblige him on this occasion, declared, with an angry glance at her husband, that she had lately settled some long-standing debts, and was, in consequence, absolutely drained of all her ready-money.

Unfortunately for Captain Marchant, she was a lady perfectly well able to take care of herself, and having once announced her decision there was no chance of her altering it. He recognized this, and so made the best of the position, and, declaring that it really was a matter of little consequence, bade her an airy adieu; and declining her invitation to stay luncheon, he walked rapidly in the direction of the station, and had time, before the train came, to look round at the passengers waiting for its arrival, and assure himself that Rosalind was not amongst them.

He asked a porter when the last up-train had gone, and from the man's answer convinced himself that Rosalind could not possibly have caught it. Where, then, could she be? There was only one road from The Towers to the station, and it was certain he had not passed her as he came up, for he had kept a sharp look-out all the way.

"Things are going contrarily to-day," he said to himself, as he lighted a cigar. "Well, I must make the best of them, I suppose, and see if I can't get something out of Vansittart."

Arrived in London, he took a hansom, and drove at once to his club, where the first person he saw was Mr. Pierce Vansittart himself, who had just ordered luncheon, and was now awaiting its appearance. Marchant joined him at this meal, and when it was over the two sauntered out to smoke a cigar.

"How long do you intend staying in town?" asked the officer, attempting to lead the conversation into a personal channel.

"I can't tell you. It depends on whether I succeed in obtaining news of my wife or not."

"Ah! Then you are up on business, not pleasure?"

"Business most decidedly," returned Vansittart, rather grimly. "I have not the money for pleasure, however much I may have the inclination."

Marchant's face fell. The declaration did not sound favourable for his own hopes.

"I am sorry for that," he said, frankly, "and surprised as well. I thought, when your wife's nephew died—there was a tinge of hesitation as he spoke these words—" he came into the whole of his large fortune!"

"She did—I did not."

"But now that she has left you, you have full control of the money, surely?"

"Nothing of the sort. I wish to Heaven I had! If that were the case, you may rest assured I should not be making all these efforts to find her. She would be welcome to stay away as long as she liked, and the longer the better."

This was news to Marchant, who had fancied that Mrs. Vansittart's flight had left her husband a rich man. He was silent for a few minutes, watching the smoke wreaths in a meditative fashion, and revolving in his mind how to give most weight to the communication he intended making regarding the former tenants of the Cedars. He saw now that it was worth his while to turn informer, and he cursed his own foolishness for not having telegraphed to Vansittart the moment he suspected his wife's presence at the lonely old house.

"By the way, where are you staying now?" asked Vansittart, breaking in on his friend's reverie.

"I? Oh, I am still with my friends, the Charltons, at Crowthorne Manor."

"Business or pleasure?" queried the other, cynically.

"Both. Fact is, I am in love with Miss Charlton—you needn't look incredulous, Vansittart. I assure you it is a fact."

"Oh, my dear fellow, I would not dispute your word for anything; but I suppose the being in love promises that the young lady has money?"

"You are right, it does. She is an heiress, and if I only succeed in winning her, I intend settling down into a model husband, and playing the rôle of country squire for the rest of my life."

"Turning over a new leaf, in fact? Well, I congratulate you. I take it for granted that Miss Charlton has sufficient good taste to return your affection?"

"That's the rub. So far she has shown herself decidedly rebellious, but I have her father's good wishes, and I fancy that, sooner or later, she must give in—in fact, I intend that she shall give in. I have never been foiled by a woman yet, and I have had considerable experience with the sex."

"Experience counts for very little with some women," observed Vansittart, sententiously. "However, I hope Miss Charlton won't prove obstinate. You have my best wishes for success, and I wish it were in my power to aid you in your wooing."

"It is in your power. Lend me a hundred pounds, and you will be contributing very materially to my probable success."

"A hundred pounds! Impossible! I give you my word of honour that I have not fifty pounds standing to my credit at the bank. All my income, and a good deal more, goes in paying interest on mortgages. If you were to promise to repay me in an hour's time I could not lend you the money."

"But you could accept a bill. Your name is still good for that!"

"Perhaps so, but the business is too risky. No, Marchant, I have helped you a good many times, but I can't this time."

"But you must!" exclaimed the officer, energetically. "Look here, Vansittart, if I don't get the money by the end of this week I am a ruined man, and all my chances of winning Edith Charlton will be gone for ever. Saunders has positively declared that unless I give him a hundred pounds he will make me bankrupt, and then think what an exposure there will be! If I can only tide matters over until after my engagement is made public I shall be all right. Don't you understand?"

"I understand," responded Vansittart, with

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the cheerfulness with which we are wont to bear our friend's troubles," "but all the same, I really don't see why I must find the money for you?"

"Because I can make it worth your while. It isn't a pleasant thing to bargain with one's friends, so I shall trust to your generosity. You are anxious to discover two people—one is your wife, the other is Sir Kenneth Hawtrey's wife. I may be able to give you the clue to both."

"Do so, and I'll back your bill without hesitation!" said Vansittart, rapidly, and then Marchant told him, first of all, of his recognition of Mrs. Vansittart at the Cedars, and, secondly, of his meeting with Rosalind that morning.

Vansittart listened impatiently, but without interruption; and, as the officer finished, he said—

"So Claud Trevelyan is still with Nona! I feared as much. Why, in the name of Heaven, did you not let me know directly you discovered her?"

"Because I was not aware that her absence made any pecuniary difference to you; and I fancied that, if I betrayed her, it meant she would be accused of murdering her nephew. I did not relish the idea of playing Judas."

Vansittart cast a swift glance at him from under his lashes, and a sneering smile curved his lips beneath his heavy moustache.

"You are grown scrupulous all of a sudden. I confess I don't understand it, but doubtless you have your reasons, and they are probably satisfactory ones; still, I really can't see that your information is of much value. My wife has left the Cedars, and you know no more of her present whereabouts than I do. As for Rosalind Hawtrey—well, it is true she told you she was staying in London, but London is a big place, and I may look for her for twelve months without being able to find her."

"Wait a minute," Marchant returned, drawing a slip of paper from his pocket. "It so happened that the young lady gave her address to Mrs. Smith, from whom I contrived to procure it. It is No. 12, — Street, Euston-road. There, take it! Now, concerning your wife. If she herself is not at the Cedars, an old servant of hers is still there, and from her you ought to be able to obtain a clue."

"Obtain a clue from Abigail Young? She would cut her tongue out rather than give it to me! She hates me like poison! No, I don't think it will be much good to tackle her," said Vansittart, gloomily, and he walked on for some distance without speaking.

"But, I say, old fellow," observed Marchant, presently, with a somewhat puzzled expression of countenance, "do you mean to tell me that you can't reap any benefit from your wife's fortune?"

"Not a penny piece! All the estate her brother left was personal. It consisted of various securities, and a large quantity of diamonds; and all these she contrived to take away with her. I am telling you the truth, Marchant."

The officer believed him; but, for all that, he made one more effort to induce him to accept a bill at six months. Vansittart, however, was obdurate, declaring that as soon as he found his wife he would be glad enough to oblige his friend, but, at the present moment, his own means were too limited to allow him to do so.

In order to avoid Marchant's importunities he changed the subject.

"I had a visitor at Weir Castle last week," he observed. "You will be surprised when you hear it was Sir Kenneth Hawtrey!"

The officer gave a long, low whistle. "I am surprised. Did he come as friend or foe?"

"Certainly not friend. It is many years since Kenneth Hawtrey and I were friends. No, he came to demand an explanation of my former relations with Marquitta de Belvoir. He insisted on hearing what he called 'the truth.'"

"And you?"

"Well, I told him he knew as much of the affair as I did, and that it was a mistake to rake up old love stories. He wished me to give him Marquitta's letters, but I answered that they were burnt years ago."

"Was that true?"

Vansittart shrugged his shoulders.

"True or not, he will never see them. I expect he wanted to show the letters to his wife—beautiful fury that she is! She is far handsomer than Marquitta was in her best days!"

"Yes, a dangerous woman to trifle with," answered Marchant, significantly; and soon after the friends—if such men can be called "friends"—parted, and the officer went back to Crowthorne, thinking of the scene he had witnessed at the Cedars, and the long, narrow box he had seen Claud Trevelyan bury in the plantation.

Did that box contain the securities and gems of which Vansittart had spoken?

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

Claud took Rosalind into a darkened room, where, in the dim light, she was just able to discern a feminine form lying on a couch.

Poor Nona Vansittart had discarded her disguise, and now appeared as a young and beautiful woman with quantities of golden hair, and wild-looking dark eyes, and, strange to say, though the sight was gone, the eyes themselves were as lovely as ever.

"Nona," the young man said, "I have brought you a nurse who will be tender and kind, and on whose faith you may place implicit reliance. She is an old friend of mine, one of whom you have heard me speak. Her name was Rosalind Grant."

Nona started to her feet, turning in the direction from which the voice came, and stretching out her hands with the touchingly helpless action of the blind.

"Then you have told—?" she began, but broke off abruptly as Claud put his hand on her arm.

"I have told her enough to assure her sympathy. Let that satisfy you."

"Indeed," said Rosalind, very earnestly, as she came forward, "you may trust me. I have had troubles myself, and it shall be the object of my life to try and lessen yours."

"Your voice is true and sweet—yes, I do not think I need be afraid of you," Nona returned slowly; then she passed her hand gently over the young woman's face, and, apparently satisfied by the result, bent down and kissed Rosalind's lips.

After this all her scruples seemed to vanish, and to the great relief both of Claud and Rosalind she unhesitatingly accepted the latter as a friend.

This made our heroine's task so much the easier, besides having another good effect. In poor Mrs. Vansittart's sorrows she almost forgot her own, for they seemed trivial enough in comparison. Altogether she was thankful that Fate had thrown her in Claud's way on that eventful morning.

For two or three days matters went on very quietly; then Rosalind went up to town to pay the few shillings she owed for rent—Claud having, with considerate kindness, pressed upon her a five-pound note as part of her salary in advance.

There were also a few things—letters and garments—she had left behind, and these she packed up in a black bag, small enough to be carried in her hand.

By the time she had finished her arrangements, and paid the landlady, it was dusk, and when she left the house a thin drizzling rain was falling, and added to the gloom.

"Thank heaven, I have quit that miserable place for ever!" she said to herself, as the door closed behind her; and then she set off to walk to the station.

Before she had gone far she noticed a man who seemed to be following her, and when she reached the station and took her ticket he was close to her elbow. After that, however, she

did not see him again, and she dismissed the subject from her mind, thinking that she must have been mistaken in her surmise, and that the man's continued proximity had been only the result of accident.

When she arrived at her destination Claud, wrapped up in a huge cloak, and broad-brimmed hat that served to conceal his face, was waiting to escort her home.

"It is a miserable night!" he observed. "I hope you won't mind walking? I would have taken a cab, but I wish to avoid observation as much as possible."

"Pray don't think of doing such a thing!" exclaimed Rosalind, who seemed already to have identified herself with her new friends. "I have a waterproof, and that will keep me dry."

He offered his arm, which she took, and they made the best of their way along the muddy lane leading to the White House. Once or twice Claud turned round to look back, and the second time Rosalind asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," he answered, "only I fancied I heard some one behind. It is so dark that it would be well-nigh impossible to see any one half-a-dozen yards away."

He paused again to listen, but there was no sound to be heard save the melancholy dripping of the raindrops from the bare branches of the trees, and, as he said, it was too dark to see. It did not strike Rosalind to tell him of her fancy that she had been followed from the Euston Road. Naturally enough, she did not connect the two circumstances.

When they reached the house Claud fetched a dark lantern, and carefully retraced his steps, and then he was enabled to trace other footprints that had followed closely on his own, and his idea that he had been tracked was confirmed. But the footprints ceased at the gates of the house, and went back again; so the conclusion he finally drew was that the man, whoever he might be, had found he had made a mistake, and had thereupon returned to the station.

He said nothing of this to Nona, whose nerves, originally strong, were now liable to be thoroughly upset at the slightest alarm. Indeed, the very next morning she gave evidence of the weak state into which she had fallen; for when Claud joined her in her own sitting-room—a small apartment—opening on the garden—she said,

"I have had a bad dream, Claud, and it is worrying me. I woke up in the middle of the night terrified, and I have not been able to sleep since."

He sat down by her side on the couch, and gently stroked her hand.

"My dear Nona, you should not allow yourself to be worried by such trivial things. We are all liable to bad dreams occasionally, you know."

"But this was such a vivid one. I dreamt that ~~he~~—my husband—had found out where the box was, and that he carried it off in the middle of the night. I saw the scene—oh; so distinctly!"

Claud sighed.

"I wish, Nona, you would make up your mind to let him have the box and the money. He would cease persecuting you then."

She turned upon him with a fierceness almost incomprehensible in so gentle a being.

"Yes, but at what cost? That money I look upon as the price of my nephew's blood. It was for that his life was wrested from him—for that the cruel poison tortured him. Shall I ever forget his cries, as he lay in my arms, writhing in his agonies? Oh! the remembrance is with me still. It maddens me. It makes me long for a terrible, but most just vengeance on the wretch who took that innocent life!"

She rose in her excitement, and began pacing backwards and forwards, Claud watching her apprehensively. Blind as she was, there was no danger of her running against anything, for the furniture was arranged with a view to her affliction, and there was nothing

in the middle of the room for her to stumble on. Presently, she came back and resumed her seat, and in the dim light—for the room was darkened in obedience to the oculist's orders—Claud saw that tears were still streaming down her pallid cheeks.

"Hush!" he said, soothingly. "Why should you distress yourself by recalling these sad memories? To think of them can do no good."

"Perhaps not; but it can, and does, keep alive my hatred of my villain husband. For the injuries he has done me I make no complaint, but for the agony he inflicted on a helpless child—there is no punishment great enough for him. I have only one way of revenging little Willie's death, and that is taking care that his murderer shall not have his money, and for that I will struggle as long as I live."

Claud made no further attempt to combat her resolution. He was too unselfish to remind her that his life as well as being sacrificed in the atmosphere of mystery in which they lived. True, he had voluntarily devoted himself to her service, and he had never regretted the chivalric impulse that had led him to do it; but the thought of Edith and her lost love made his life one constant pain.

"If I recover my sight," went on Nona, after a pause, "I shall be able to fight my own battles, and I shall have no fear of Pierce Vansittart, even if he does shut me up in a lunatic asylum. Then, when I am free, I will devote the greater part of little Willie's money to building a hospital for sick children. Claud," turning to him desperately, "do you think I ever shall recover my sight?"

"The oculist gives us hope, dear. If you are careful, and follow his instructions, I think there is every probability of the hope being fulfilled."

"That is something to live for!" she said. Then she added, musingly, "Even the blind have their compensations, for the other senses all become sharpened, and I sometimes think they have the gift of second sight as well. My dream last night, for instance. I am sure it is true, Claud!" Her voice changed—grew sharp with alarm. "You must go to the Cedars and bring that box away with you. I cannot rest any longer for fear it may be discovered. Do you hear? You must go—you must!"

"Certainly I will go, if you wish it," returned Claud, seeing that she was in no mood to be contradicted. "But you must recollect that the box is too heavy for me to bring here without challenging suspicion."

"You can open it and take the securities and the diamonds out. The rest can be left in charge of Abigail Young."

"When do you wish me to go?"

"Now—at once—this very day!"

"But, my dear Nona," expostulated Claud, "surely there is no necessity for this hurry?"

"There is, there is!" she returned, feverishly. "My dream tells me that the box is not safe, and there is danger if it remains in its present hiding-place one moment more than is necessary. I shall not have an instant's peace until I know it is removed."

"Very well," Claud said, in a tone of resignation. "Then I will start for W—shire by the four o'clock train from Paddington. I need not tell you that it would not do for me to arrive at the Cedars before dusk, for fear of being recognised."

"Surely you can disguise yourself!"

"Yes, I must disguise myself, I suppose, much as I dislike it. There is another point that we have not considered. How will you like being left here alone?"

"I shall not be alone. Rosalind and Andrea will both be with me."

"Andrea would not prove much good in case of emergency. He is thoroughly trustworthy, but he is somewhat of a coward physically. Rosalind, though she is a woman, is infinitely more reliable. Still, I don't relish the idea of leaving you."

"What is there to fear? No one suspects our presence here, and I feel no apprehensions like I did at the Cedars. I suppose I am growing more used to my position. At any rate, I am much braver than I was. Besides, I have Nero!"

"Ah, yes! Nero is a protection, I admit."

"By the way," said Nona, "where is he?"

"I haven't seen him this morning."

"I will call him," answered Claud, rising as he spoke, and going into the passage. A moment afterwards he returned, followed by a huge mastiff, who bounded up to Nona and began licking her hands.

"Down, Nero, down, sir!" she said, gently repulsing him. A sudden change came over the dog; he sniffed suspiciously round, erected his bristles, and gave vent to a low, threatening growl.

Claud watched him uneasily, and then followed him to the window, which was a French one opening on the garden. A dark green blind was drawn down over it, but one of the doors was open.

"Why, Nona, how is this? The window is open!" said the young man, as he closed it, and turned with some surprise to his companion, who had risen and come to his side.

"Is it? I thought I fastened it securely after I had thrown the crumbs out to the birds half-an-hour ago! I am afraid," she added, with a melancholy inflection in her voice, "that my boasted sense of touch is not so keen as it might be."

Claud did not tell her it was unwise, in her present position, to run any risks; but he hastily left the room, and made a hurried examination of the grounds, for the dog's demeanour had made him fancy there might have been some stranger lurking about the place.

However, he found no traces of one, and returned to the house, inclined to ridicule his own fears, which last night, as well as this morning, had caused him useless apprehension.

He was a few minutes too late. Had he come out when Nero first showed signs of dissatisfaction he would have seen a man's figure stealing swiftly along under the shadow of the shrubs, and had he been near enough he might have heard the triumphant whisper,—

"Found at last, by Jove!"

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

At midday Claud set off for London, and left Paddington by the train he had mentioned, arriving at Crowthorne somewhere about seven o'clock. He was not by any means in love with his errand, and it was only because he saw that Nona had set her heart upon his undertaking the journey that he had allowed himself to be persuaded.

Personally, he thought the chest containing the jewels and securities was much safer in its present hiding-place than it would be under his own supervision; but it was useless to urge this, for Nona was not inclined to be logical in her fancies, and, after all, the valuables were hers, and she had a right to do what she liked with them.

He had wrapped himself in the cloak and broad-brimmed hat he usually wore, and these served to conceal his identity; but he was quite unprepared for the test to which his disguise was to be subjected. At the station before Crowthorne three people got into his compartment, where he was sitting alone, and these three were none other than Edith Charlton and her father, and Captain Marchant!

The young girl looked pale and tired, but pretty as ever. She was dressed in a dark green velvet costume, trimmed with soft, rich fur, and a little *toque* to match, which became her admirably.

Claud's heart began to beat tumultuously as he saw her, and it was with some difficulty that he restrained the exclamation that rose to his lips, and drawing himself still farther into the corner of the carriage, interposed the newspaper between himself and his companions.

The latter had been to a bazaar at a neigh-

bouring village, and were discussing it with some animation.

Edith's silvery laugh rang out now and then, but much less frequently than of old; and it was with a curiously compounded feeling of sorrow and joy that Claud recognised a certain mournfulness, both in her face and voice.

She was not the same joyous, *riante* creature, full of youth and high spirits, who had taken shelter at the Cedars on that summer morning when first they met!

She looked at him curiously once or twice. The eyes of love are keen, and, despite his disguising dress, there was something in his figure that struck her as familiar. Fortunately for Claud, the light was very dim and flickering, and the corner in which he sat enveloped in shadow, otherwise Captain Marchant, too, might have had his suspicions aroused.

"I am afraid you are tired, Edith," the officer said, solicitously, and Claud ground his teeth together at the familiarity implied by the use of the young girl's Christian name.

"You have been too busy at your stall. We ought not to have allowed you to do so much."

"I think I did very little compared with most of the other girls," she responded, languidly. "One or two seemed to be running about the whole of the day!"

"Running about!" repeated the Squire, sardonically. "I should think they were. Never was so pestered by girls in my life—wanted me to put in a dozen raffles for rubbish that, if I had won it—which was very unlikely, since no outsider ever does win anything at bazaars—I should have thrown into the fire. A set of bold, unprincipled busses! I call 'em! I should have liked to see you," addressing his daughter, "behaving in such a fashion!"

"Some girls don't mind what they do so that they attract attention!" murmured the Captain, laughing, and caressing his silky moustache.

"Attract! Disgust, you should say!" amended the Squire, grimly. "However, they didn't get much out of me—that's one comfort."

"No, papa; you were extremely stingy, I must say."

The Squire accepted the imputation with much complacency.

"One has a right to button up one's breeches pockets when it comes to choosing between that and being cheated," chuckled he.

At this moment Crowthorne was reached, and the train stopped. The Squire got out first, Marchant following. Then Edith rose, but as she did so a little bag she carried in her hand fell to the ground.

Claud sprang forward and picked it up, and, in stooping, his hat got pushed back a little, and his eyes met hers. A stifled cry broke from her, showing she recognised him, and he then became aware of his imprudence.

"For Heaven's sake say nothing of my presence!" he managed to whisper, and she made a swift motion of the head signifying assent, while he sank back in his corner again, for he had determined, under the circumstances, to go on to the next station, and walk from there to the Cedars.

As the train moved off, an involuntary groan escaped his lips. Happiness had been so very near him. He had but to reach out his hand in order to seize it, and yet a cruel fate kept him back!

"I dare not justify myself in her eyes," he muttered aloud, "and she, believing me false, will marry Marchant, who is utterly unworthy of her. Yes, I foresee that will be the end of it all. Ah! the pity of it—the pity of it!"

As the Cedars lay about midway between the two stations, Claud had not much farther to walk than if he had alighted at Crowthorne. The old woman in charge, Abigail Young, was as surprised as she was delighted to see him, and inundated him with questions concerning Nona.



"I am afraid, Abigail," said the young man, kindly, "you have had a sorry time of it here since we left."

"Well, sir, it hasn't been over bright; but I shouldn't have minded a bit if the rheumatism hadn't taken hold of me. It's the damp, I expect—such a damp house I never was in in all my born days!"

And, indeed, a great change had come over the old woman, who had formerly been both strong and active. She could now only just manage to hobble about, and her face looked older by several years.

"I suppose no one has been to visit you, Abigail?"

She smiled grimly, and shook her head.

"No fear, Master Claud. The country people are too much afraid of ghosts to venture near the place after nightfall."

"Then," Claud's voice fell to a whisper, "there is no fear but what the box is all right?"

"None whatever, sir, I should say. You might search the world over without being able to find a better hiding-place."

"I agree with you; but, for all that, I am going to remove it, and when it is gone there will be no necessity for you to remain here any longer. You must return to your own home and be nursed back to health again."

Abigail sighed.

"I should have liked to be with Miss Nona, sir; but I really don't think I am strong enough to attend to her properly. I pray night and day that her eyesight may be restored to her, and she may be saved from the persecution of that wicked man—her husband. But," added Abigail, suddenly, "you must be hungry, sir. I haven't got much in the house, not knowing you were coming; but there is ham, and eggs. Do you think you could manage with them?"

"Try me," smiled Claud, and the old woman bustled away, while he wandered aimlessly through the richly-furnished rooms, which had been poor Nona's home and prison in one.

He did not intend digging up the buried box until after midnight. By that time there would be no fear of interruption—indeed, even in daylight there would have been very little, for, as Abigail Young said, the evil reputation the house had acquired kept the villagers away. Still, in an affair like the present, it was best to make assurance doubly sure.

And so, after he had eaten the supper Abigail prepared, Claud threw himself on the couch, and, tired out with his day's journey, fell asleep. He dreamt of Edith—Edith standing on the other side of a river, and stretching out her hands to him, as if appealing for help!

He slept longer than he intended. When he woke it was one hour after midnight.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

The lawless passion which Rosalind's beauty had aroused in the heart of Pierce Vansittart was increased with absence rather than diminished, and her scornful contempt of his vows of love and marked avoidance of himself gave a zest to his pursuit of her which might otherwise have been lacking.

During the time she was nursing her husband at Weir Cottage he found no opportunity of seeing her, and her departure was so suddenly arranged that he had no idea she contemplated leaving until after she was absolutely gone. Then he took steps towards ascertaining her whereabouts; but they were fruitless, and, as we know, it was Captain Marchant who finally gave him her address.

The next day he boldly called at the house in the Euston Road and made inquiries; but he was told the lady had gone out the preceding morning, and had not yet returned. However, he was determined not to neglect any chance of finding her, so he set his valet—a man as unscrupulous as his master—to watch the house, with the result that a few

days later the man saw Rosalind enter, and afterwards followed her down to her new home.

It was his footsteps that Claud had heard and traced.

On his return to London he acquainted Vansittart with his success, and then added,—

"I fancy, sir, that we have not only run the lady to earth but someone else as well!"

"Someone else? Whom do you mean, Seamer?"

The valet, who was partially in his master's confidence, came a little nearer, and dropped his voice to a familiar whisper.

"I mean your wife, sir."

"Good Heavens!" cried Vansittart, really surprised. "Do you mean you saw my wife?"

"No; but I saw Mr. Trevelyan. He was at the station to meet the lady. Perhaps I should not have recognised him if I had not heard his voice, for he was so muffled up that it was impossible to catch a glimpse of his face. But directly I heard him speak I knew him. It is impossible to mistake his tones."

"And did you make inquiries?"

"I did, sir. First of all, I followed the two until they went in at a gate leading to a house that I should easily know again. Then I turned back and went into the nearest public-house. There I learnt that Mr. and Mrs. Stuart—mother and son—had been living at the White House for nearly three months. The lady was never seen, and the gentleman but seldom. The household consisted of one man—a foreigner. After that I had no doubts on the subject."

"You are a clever fellow, Seamer, and I'll take care you don't go unrewarded," said his master, with genuine admiration. After a pause he added, "What sort of a house is this White House? Are there many trees about?"

"A good many shrubs, sir, I think; but it was too dark for me to see much."

"Do you think I could take a look round without running any risk of being seen?"

Seamer thought for a moment.

"I couldn't say, sir. Better let me go down if you want anything done. I shall be less likely to be recognised than you."

"Well," responded Vansittart, reflectively, "I don't want to make any mistake. It would be awkward if, when I took a warrant down for my wife's apprehension as an escaped lunatic I found I had not got the real Simon Pure. Thanks for your offer, Seamer, but I think I'll go down myself. I am pretty quick at getting out of the way if there's danger."

So by the first train the following morning Mr. Vansittart arrived at the White House, and made a careful examination of the premises before even the servant was up. Then he ensconced himself behind a group of shrubs opposite one of the lower windows, and some time later had the satisfaction of seeing his blind wife throw some crumbs out to the birds—as was her usual custom.

He noticed that when she withdrew she pulled the window to, but did not fasten it, and then he cautiously advanced, under cover of the shrubs, and peered in. But the blind was drawn, and he dared not pull it on one side, for fear of the noise being heard. It was at that juncture Claud entered; and Vansittart, who was as bold as he was unscrupulous, remained outside the window, listening to the conversation that ensued, and trusting to his wits for getting away in case of discovery.

He stayed there until Claud left the room to fetch the dog; then, having learned a good deal, he walked swiftly back to the station again, revolving many plans in his mind as he went.

He had not seen Rosalind, but that mattered little, for now his primary object was to secure his wife, which meant securing her fortune. After that was effected, there would still be time enough to let Lady Hawtrey see that he had not forgotten her.

But the mention of the buried box had forced him to alter his plans. That, at all hazards, must be secured, and without loss of

time, for if it once got into Claud Trevelyan's hands it might be difficult to compel him to give it up. Vansittart's brows knitted themselves together in a heavy frown as he ruminated on the pros and cons of the matter.

"The box is at the Cedars—buried somewhere in the garden. So much seems clear," he muttered; "but the chances are ten to one against my hitting on the precise spot where it lies, unless I have something to guide me. No; I cannot manage it alone. I must follow Trevelyan down there and watch him. He must be my guide. Ha—ha! I wonder what he would say if he knew that I destined this office for him—the jackal, who shall hunt for the lion—the cat's-paw that is to draw the hot chestnuts out of the fire!"

He laughed aloud at the reflection, but his hilarity was of short duration, for he had to think out the position, and decide on his plan of action. Even if he did follow Claud, and watch him while he unearthed the treasure, there still remained the task of wresting it from his possession, and to do this, as Vansittart knew, would be no easy matter.

A dark look came in his eyes. He was thinking of a tiny revolver lying in its case in his breast pocket—a pretty-looking, silver-mounted toy that seemed made for ornament, not for use. But he knew that the seemingly innocent toy could be put to a deadly use; and though he had no desire for Claud's life, he was quite determined that nothing should stand in the way of the wealth he had striven so hard, and plotted so deeply, to get.

"I have no wish to kill him, but if he shows fight I must disable him," he muttered. "After all, I have a right to the money—not he; and when it is once in my possession I must turn my attention to my charming wife—curse her!" He ground his teeth together as he thought of Nona; then a wicked, sneering smile curved his handsome lips.

"A children's hospital you are going to build, are you, my lady? I am afraid your wish is doomed to disappointment. Your nephew's money will be devoted to far different purposes. Pahaw! I wonder why the thought of the child Willie haunts me so? I fancied my conscience, or what in me does duty for one, was pretty well hardened by this time."

In order to run no risk of being seen by Claud, Vansittart resolved to be at the Cedars before he arrived, and accordingly caught the midday train from Paddington. Luckily for his purpose the afternoons were very short, and it was already dark when he arrived at Crowthorne station. As it was Christmas time there were more passengers than usual, and for this he was thankful, as he passed unnoticed in the throng.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2051. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.)

#### THE HOUR OUR HEARTS SHALL MEET

Somewhere within the path of Time in the years that are to be,  
There lies a gem—one perfect day that you and I shall see.  
Its morn shall break without a cloud to dim the skies above,  
And all its hours be lighted by the matchless light of love.  
Each wish we ever hold most dear and in our prayers repeat,  
Upon that day shall be fulfilled, the day our hearts shall meet.  
That day will come—for which I sigh—that day of which I dream—  
When dark distrust shall pass away and Love shall reign supreme.  
And in that day of perfect rest our glowing hearts shall feel  
A thrill akin to heaven's joy o'er all our senses steal.  
And like a dream when we awake, the sad past shall retreat,  
When dawns the morning of that day, the day our hearts shall meet.

## HER SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

### SHORT STORY



HERE were odours of turpentine and hot paint upon the air when Nora thrust her curly head into Miss Yarwood's studio.

"Whew!" she cried, "aren't you burnt up? What is it now?"

"It's pin trays—six of them! And I am too warm, but I wanted to dry the colour well; there's so little time."

"I wonder you don't die, Miss Alice! You are cooped up here from daylight until dark, and even after dark, now that winter orders are coming in. How late did you work last night?"

"Twelve," said Miss Yarwood, half apologetically. "But you don't know how thankful I am that I can do those Dresden designs at night! See here; aren't these dainty? I'm going to fire them to-night"; and Miss Yarwood straightened her stiffened figure and led the way to a tall cabinet filled with odd bits of china, from among which she indicated one particular row of tiny cups and saucers.

"Oh, the dainty darlings!" cried the young girl, with positive rapture. "How you do them I can't even imagine. And will those black dots and scrolls be gold after the firing?"

"Gold as can be!" laughed the other. "They're an order for Kitty Birch; not a Christmas present, if you please, but for the wedding of her dearest friend."

"What will you get for them?" Nora asked suddenly, with the liberty of one familiar with the "business" of the studio.

Miss Yarwood hesitated a moment, and a little flame of colour shot into the pallor of her cheek as she replied—

"One pound."

"A piece!"

"No, no—for all of them."

Nora stared blankly, and then fairly shrieked—

"Only a pound for the whole half-dozen? Why, you have worked for days on them, and—what did the plain china cost?"

"Only a trifle each."

"Say ten shillings for the set. And how much gold have you used on them?"

"Not more than five shillings' worth, if that much," came the faint response.

"Then you'll get five shillings for working two days and nights, putting out your eyes, breaking your devoted back, ruining your health, and—and the firing to do. I forgot to count that and the gas. Miss Alice, my dear, you are an idiot! You make me absolutely furious!" And Nora stalked to the other side of the room and flounced angrily into a seat by the low window.

"Listen, dearie," Miss Alice spoke with a little deprecatory gesture. "It's Kitty's very, very dearest friend, and she did want to give her something charmingly pretty, and yet one golden sovereign was every penny she could afford."

"Then why didn't she use up her own strength and nerves and eyesight instead of yours, in her investment? She can manage to wear beautiful clothes and warm furs and several hats a season, while you are going about in a cloak you have worn for five years—and even your best dress frayed at the edges."

"Now, Nora, I'm sure my cloak is still stylish and pretty, and I bound the frayed edges only last week, so the dress looks as good as new. I'm sure I always look nice."

"Nice!" You look like an angel!" And impulsive Nora flung both arms about the little spinster and kissed her hot cheek.

"When I get to heaven I shall expect to see all the angels wearing darned-over cashmeres and big gingham aprons that smell of lavender and tinting oil. Can't you come out, just for

a minute, for a walk and a breath of fresh air?"

Miss Yarwood shook her head with a mock-woful grimace.

"I must get the cream-jug ready for the firing, and all the gold's to be put on that vase yet. To-morrow's Sunday, dear; we'll have a long walk then, in the afternoon."

Nora sighed and left the room; but Miss Yarwood smiled as her fine brush trailed delicate lines of gold over the pale blossoms on the ivory-tinted cream-jug.

"Nora doesn't realise how fortunate I am," she said. "I never had so many orders before at this time of the year."

Meanwhile Nora was freeing her mind to Caesar, the huge mastiff, who stretched his great legs as he rose from the door mat.

"She's killing herself, Caesar, for five shillings a day. Come, sir, you need a run. We'll take the back way to the grocery and get a bag of cool oranges for that hot little goose. There now, one, two—run!" It was twilight and the street was still. "Nobody'll know we are school-marms, Caesar. This is glorious! Go it, I say—Oh! oh, dear!—gracious!—I beg your pardon. If it isn't Doctor Grimes!"

"Or what is left of him," that gentleman flustered. "Will you tell me, miss, what you mean by tilting headlong in this fashion at respectable old gentlemen who weigh fifteen stone!"

"If you please, sir, we were in a bit of a hurry going for oranges for Miss Alice."

"If she needs 'em that badly I think I'll turn back with you to see that you get a good sort. There's a new Florida orange in—thin-skinned and sweet. M—h—ah, how is Miss Alice to-day?"

"Cooked, sir."

"What?"

"She's being slowly roasted, I say, in that little studio of hers. I'd like to be her

mother, Doctor Grimes, for about a year till I could teach her some sense!"

"I have found Miss Yarwood a lady of extremely sound sense and good judgment," said Doctor Grimes, with dignity.

"Then you don't know her as well as I do," came the unabashed retort. "You don't know her business methods. She's doing charitable work for people who could buy her—house, lot, and all—who call themselves her patrons! You don't know, perhaps, that she has her breakfast at six o'clock in the morning that she may lose no minute of precious daylight; that she hardly takes time to eat all day; that she gives her eyes and her strength, and her real artistic talent to the graceless people of Birchwood for the munificent sum of five shillings a day."

"You don't mean it!" gasped the doctor.

"Indeed I do! And I want to fight somebody. She's almost ill, this minute; but she will tell me, smiling sweetly, that she must earn her bread and butter, and that she's so thankful she can!"

Doctor Grimes cleared his throat.

"I haven't been long in Birchwood," he said. "I fancied Miss Yarwood did her china painting mainly for amusement."

"Well, that's about all she gets out of it," said the girl, grimly; "but even amusements may be indulged in to excess. Oranges, yes—Floridas, a dozen."

"And a couple of pounds of those grapes," put in the doctor, pointing with his stick to the sawdusty box over which luscious white clusters were hanging. "Well, well, well, there ought to be a guardian, I should say. She looks well enough to other people's needs. There was that Osgood family—shiftless things!—I first ran across her there—"

"That's where her muff went, because poor Mrs. Osgood's hands looked cold—big fat things!—and her own have frozen blue ever since. She never will learn any sense!"

"Tut! tut!" Miss Nora. No, you needn't

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say I sent the grapes—I shouldn't dare," and the big doctor really looked alarmed. "But I hope she'll eat them."

"If she doesn't her boarder will," and Nora laughed mischievously.

She was still smiling, over thoughts all her own, when she looked into the studio again at tea time. Miss Yarwood dropped her brush for a moment and looked knowingly at the rosy, girlish face.

"I saw you, Nora, you rogue—both of you. And, my dear, there's the right sort of man; how different from those light creature Billy Smith and Tom. Not that Billy and Tom aren't nice boys in their way, but the doctor is so fine and big and handsome! And I saw him look after you, Nora, dear, as you came in at the gate, almost as if he would have to turn and follow."

"It's likely enough he wanted to," laughed the girl.

Miss Yarwood looked at her half wistfully. "Don't take it too lightly, Nora, my big, happy girl. Love doesn't come to all lives—not such love as his would be. I tell you, he's a real nobleman, Nora."

"Too fat," commented Nora, laconically.

Miss Yarwood looked aghast. Then she said, with a little quiet dignity:

"He's a large man, not fat. We'll go to supper, Nora."

They had come back from their walk on Sunday afternoon, and if Miss Yarwood's hands were blue with cold her cheeks were pink enough, and her soft, brown eyes held warm lights in their depths.

"Wasn't it delightful?" she said, with a long-drawn breath as she sank into the chair Nora drew before the blazing coals. "I feel like another person. And how beautiful the fire is! Chloë never forgets to have it warm and crackling at the very minute when I seem to need it most. My dear, do you know I feel such a great surge of thankfulness roll over me that I could go down on my knees and cry and thank the Lord at the same minute. Who am I that all these blessings should be heaped upon me?" There was something very like tears gleaming in the brown eyes as she spoke. "A cosy home, my very own, a devoted servant, a friend—and what a friend you have been to me, Nora!"

She paused with a little choke in her voice, and Nora had not the heart to repeat aloud her running commentary:

"A cosy home," earned by her own hard struggles; "a devoted servant," at exorbitant wages a week; and "a friend," Nora, the boarder, who pays two pounds for a three-pound room and her board."

"It has always been like this, Nora, since I can first remember." Miss Yarwood had thrown off her coat and was looking ruminantly into the coals.

Nora swung a low chair forward, and poked the fire a trifle viciously.

"I am tempted to tell you something I have never told a living soul!" cried Miss Yarwood, with a little start, turning the brown eyes full upon the beloved boarder. Her voice was low, as became the telling of a deep secret, but clear and sweet and alive with feeling. "It is this, Nora: That I believe myself to be, in a special sense, one favoured of heaven—a charge of Providence—a real ward of the dear Lord! I wonder if it sounds wicked to say so—or conceited? I have never breathed it aloud before, but I have been deeply impressed with it from childhood; and weak and sinful and undeserving as I am, I believe it to be true—true! How could it be otherwise? Other people have had terrible trials and troubles—"

"And so have you!" burst forth the girl impetuously.

Miss Yarwood turned meditative eyes upon her.

"Oh, yes, of course, there have been clouds and rainy days, but God kept his sun shining steadily for me behind them. Always, I have been specially protected and guarded and

shielded from harm. To-night, for very thankfulness, I can't be dumb. Let me tell you, Nora, I had a sweetheart once—"

Nora sat alert

"I was very young. I hardly knew him, for he was a stranger in our town, but I loved him desperately—I think I really did. We were engaged to be married. My clothes were made—what pleasure I took in them! and the day set. But just a week before it an officer came and—arrested James. Nora, that handsome young sweetheart of mine was as cold-blooded a villain as ever lived! He had robbed his own father, gambled away his money—I can't tell you all the story of his sins! What I want you to see is that the Lord himself was watching over me to keep me from becoming the miserable wife of that wicked man."

Nora sat, a speechless sceptic, as the sweet voice went on:

"Of course, it hurt for a long time. But after awhile I was helped past it till all the pain was gone, and in a strange, sweet way, it seemed to me that bitter experience helped me to appreciate the really grand, good man I later learned to love."

"And he?" Miss Nora leaned forward as she asked the question and held her breath.

"He taught me how truly fine and pure a man's life may be, how all ennobling his love. I honoured him so entirely that when he afterwards found he had been mistaken in his love for me I could only admire the consideration, the real nobility of character, that prompted him to frankly tell me so."

The girl by the fireside gave a little gulp and looked away; but if the faintest shadow crossed the fair face of the elder woman there lurked no trace of bitterness within it.

"I love children, Nora—you know that. And I used to dream day-dreams of babies lisping about my own knees, babies with Robert's fine white brow, and Robert's

clustering curls. But even this lack in my life is compensated to me. There isn't a child in this whole neighbourhood that doesn't love to come to Auntie Alice's. On all sides, you see, I find love and tenderness. And then this beautiful gift of mine! What, if like many a poor soul, I had to eke out a miserable existence with a poorly paid needle, or doing work too heavy for my strength?"

"Oh, you'd do it, and shout praises over your machine or your wash-tub."

Miss Yarwood laughed a little joyous laugh.

"What a tease you are, Nora. One would almost think you didn't believe in my talent or my—my secret."

"I'll tell you what I believe," said Nora seriously. "I believe you have the sunniest disposition a woman was ever blessed with!"

"Yes, I have that, too!" beamed Miss Yarwood, with the naivete of a child. "There isn't anything a kindly Providence hasn't given me."

Nora looked at the re-bound best dress, at the thin little figure, the tired but smiling eyes, and forbore to speak.

"I wonder what she'd do with half the blessings most women have!" she thought.

It happened in the most curious way, just three nights later, that big Doctor Grimes, passing the Yarwood cottage, stopped in the shadow of the fir tree to gaze in at the little studio; and at that same instant, Miss Yarwood, leaning over her china kiln, more tired than ever, and just a little "shaky" from loss of sleep and appetite, suddenly "gave out" entirely and fell, tea cups, pin trays, and all, against her kiln, and on, in a heap of a twinkling porcelain, to the floor. Curiously, too, Doctor Grimes forgot all about his ridiculous shyness of the little woman, vaulted her fence (fir tree, too, he afterwards thought, so

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great had been his haste) and in half a flying minute reached her side, lifted her out of her pitiful ruins, and sat her bolt upright upon a chair.

She had not fainted—not she. She was only a trifle dazed, and “not very strong,” as she explained. She felt there was some explanation called for, for there was absolutely no misunderstanding the fact that the big doctor, having sat her upon her chair, had shaken her soundly.

“Not very strong, indeed!” (Another shake.) “I have heard about it! Miss Nora says you need a guardian, and I am come to be he.” His voice was harsh and angry.

“Don’t you know you are killing yourself?” Then it came over him suddenly just how pale and thin and pitifully small she looked, this misguided bread winner, and he looked about wildly until his eye rested upon a pillow across in the little window seat. He strode after it; then he put it gently back of her head.

“I—did I—shake you, you frail little mite of a woman? I might have killed you; the Lord only knows how easily I could do it. And rather than hurt a hair of your head—”

He stopped and looked unsteadily at her, for his eyes were swimming in sudden tears. And Miss Alice felt a strange yearning in her heart towards this man whom she had selected to be dear Nora’s lover.

“You didn’t—shake me—very hard, I guess,” she stammered. “I must have provoked you to do it, falling clumsily, like that—”

He stopped her short.

“What sort of an old party do you think me, anyhow, Miss Alice? Would you believe a thing I told you as solemn truth?”

“Oh, I would!” she cried, looking steadily into the kind, gray eyes.

“Then please believe that I love you from my very heart, and that, old bachelor as I am I shall always be, unless you let me come as business manager of this firm. As Mrs. Grimes you may paint tea-cups for me alone, and I’ll promise unbounded admiration and prompt pay. Will you be my wife, Alice, and let the love and care of a lifetime atone for the ugly gruffness I’ve shown you to night?”

He was holding both her hands, and, kneeling there perilously on those broken bits of fine arts, could look straight into the big, brown eyes.

“I thought I had given all my heart to—”

—to Robert—but that was long ago, and—

“And now?”

“And now you—you remind me of him—in being so grand and good, I mean—so much so that I believe, in time—”

“How much time?” cried this impatient lover. “Don’t you know that since that first day in the leaky Osgood villa I’ve thought of you day and night, and loved you until I’ve been a perfect old fool? How much time? Can’t you love me in five minutes? Now?”

And the little woman, moved by some impulse, leaned suddenly forward and tremulously kissed the gray-sprinkled hair of the doctor. That kiss installed the new business manager.

When Miss Nora came in, five minutes later, two happier people she was sure she had never seen. But it was only to her pillow she confided, and in the dead of night, that not until she saw the big doctor’s protecting arm about the little spinster did she take much stock in that “special Providence.”

**A GREAT FRIEND.**—“Well, old fellow, it’s all settled. I am going to be married in two months. You will be one of the witnesses, I hope?” “Count upon me. I never desert a friend in misfortune.”

**LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.**—“Do you think there is anything remarkable in love at first sight?” asked the romantic youth. “Not at all,” answered the cynic. “It’s when people have been looking at each other for four or five years that it becomes remarkable.”

## Gleanings

THE sarcastic woman can’t help making herself a bore.

WOMEN show wonderful skill in finding an excuse for not doing a thing.

No woman ever is willing to say marriage occupies the greater part of her thoughts.

**WHEELS.**—The earliest mention of wheels in the Bible is in Exodus xiv. 25, when the chariot wheels of the Egyptians were taken off by the Lord. But chariots are mentioned in Genesis xii. 43. But there were older nations than the Egyptians. The Chaldeans used chariots, and the Greeks—Homer’s poems date from about 900 B.C.—had chariots at the siege of Troy, 1500 B.C. Probably in reality the wheel is about as early a piece of machinery as any now existing. Of course, it has been developed, but the bicycle wheel of to-day is a lineal descendant of the section of a log of wood used by the agricultural peoples thousands of years ago.

**THE LAMPS OF THE SEA.**—Many kinds of jellyfish are phosphorescent at night, and present a wonderfully beautiful appearance when slowly moving through the water, and it is this phosphorescence which has given them the poetic title of “the lamps of the sea.” They are not less beautiful in the daytime, for most of the species are striped or tinted, some being melon-shaped, with rows of fringes dividing the sections. The tentacles are often plumed and while waving about in graceful curves, attract or gather in the food of the animal. The “Portuguese man-of-war” is probably the best known, as well as most attractive in form, of the whole family.

**HEARING BY THE TEETH.**—That faculty which we call “hearing” can be as well conveyed to the mind by means of the teeth as the ear. Curious as this assertion may appear, it is easy to prove it by the following simple experiment. Lay a watch upon a table, glass-side downwards; then stand so far from it that you cannot in the ordinary way hear the ticking. Now place one end of a small deal stick (say six feet long) upon the back of the watch, and grip the teeth to the other; with the fingers close each ear, to exclude all external noise; the beat of the watch will then be as audible as if placed against the ear. All other sounds can be conveyed in the same manner, no matter how long the stick is; for instance, if one end is put upon a pianoforte in a sitting-room facing a garden, and the stick is thirty or forty feet long, extending to the farther end of the lawn or walk; now, if the instrument is ever so lightly played, “the tune” will be instantly distinguished by any person applying the teeth to the opposite end of the stick.

**FACE SCULPTORS.**—The real sculptors of the face are not from without; they are hands spiritual working from within. Every thought is an artist. Every purpose cuts like a chisel. Every prayer lends dignity to the brow. Every impure desire leaves a mark of degradation. In a bad man one can see mud in the bottom of the eyes. It was this that Ruskin had in mind when he spoke of “the operation of the intellectual powers upon the features, in the fine cutting and chiselling of them, in the removal from them of signs of sensuality and sloth, by which they are blunted and deadened; in the substitution of energy and intensity for vacancy and insipidity; in the keenness given to the eye and the fine moulding to the brow; in the open and reflective comprehensiveness of the eye and the forehead; in the waking of the intellect that wears down the flesh and the moral enthusiasm burning its way out to heaven, through the emancipation of the earthly vessel, until the face takes on an ideal glory, a purer and higher range than that of the mere material form.” The fact none can deny.

**CAMPHOR TREE.**—The camphor tree is an evergreen, and belongs to the same genus as the tree whose bark furnishes cinnamon. It also belongs to the same class as the sassafras of the United States. It is a native of Eastern Asia, and is one of the noblest trees of that section. It grows to a considerable height. The trunk rises straight for twenty or thirty feet, and the branches then extend in all directions. The foliage is broad, lanceolate in form, of light green colour, smooth and shiny on the upper side and whitish on the under surface. The trees grow very large, frequently measuring at the trunk ten to fifteen feet in diameter.

**THEY TAKE THEIR OWN PHOTOGRAPHS.**—A naturalist has succeeded in making birds furnish him with their photographs while in the act of alighting on their nests. The birds experimented with were the purple heron and the spoonbill, but the process is applicable to many other species. It consists simply in fixing a camera near the nest, properly focussed, with the shutter on the catch, and a string arranged in such a manner that the bird, on reaching its nest, cannot avoid setting off the catch. Such photographs are more than mere curiosities, as they help to reveal the habits of the birds.

**CULTIVATED CRITICISM.**—There are times when a little learning is by no means a dangerous thing. Two ladies were looking at a picture entitled “His Only Pair.” The artist has depicted a poor boy sitting up in bed while his hard-working mother mends his only pair of trousers. The boy, although obliged to stay in bed while the repairs are under way, is contentedly eating an orange. One of the visitors looked at the picture with searching gaze, and then remarked to her companion: “His Only Pair! I don’t call that a pear at all! It’s an orange that he is eating.”

**THE INWARD CURVE.**—Woman is nothing if not thorough. The main principle of her dress has always, apparently, been the exaggeration of facts, carried to an extreme degree, and then, as a rule, suddenly and absolutely abandoned. For instance, Nature has endowed shapely woman with an exquisite inward curve of the sides of the body by the hips. That “line of beauty” the phrase which Hogarth invented, probably with an eye to that particular curve, lovely woman has always spent her utmost ingenuity in endeavouring to improve. That weapon of torture, the modern corset, needless to say, has received the unsparing condemnation of all scientific authorities upon health and beauty. In spite of damaged organs and shortened lives, however, woman has insisted upon her own standard of beauty so far as “figure” is concerned, namely, that the test of excellence is one of size.

**AN ACROSTIC OF GEMS.**—There was formerly a very pretty fashion in the setting of gems which was so quaint that it deserves to be remembered. It consisted in so setting the gems of a wedding ring that the initial letters of the gems, read in acrostic style, would give the name of the bride. Sometimes, when the names presented difficulties in gem-type, they were set up so as to form a motto on the same plan. The most interesting example of this peculiar fashion is that connected with the name of Rachel, the famous actress. Some one made her a present of a diadem in which were six jewels. The stones were so set that when read acrostically they gave not only the actress’s name, but also the initial letters of the principal parts she had played. Put in proper form and translated into English, it was as follows—R uby, A methyst, C ornelian, H ematite, E merald, L apis lazuli, R oxana, A menaide, C amille, H ermione, E milie, L adice. The first six formed the lady’s name from the initials of the gems, and the second six showed her six principal rôles, so that the gems indicated not only the name, but the occupation also.



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**BREAKFAST IN JAPAN.**—Breakfast, which in Japan is eaten at sunrise, is light and dainty. It commences with a small fruit, a persimmon usually. Then kamaboko is served, which is white fish pounded with a stone masher then rolled into little balls and baked brown in radish oil, though butter could be substituted. The inevitable tea completes this simple meal. Luncheon, a mid-day meal, begins with a soup. Charvan is a thin soup made of the bones of a large fish, strained and then boiled again with mushrooms. It is served in little bowls without handles, no larger than cups. Shiruko is a delicious kind of rice cake partaken of at luncheon. The rice is first boiled to a paste, then cut into thin cakes and fried in oil. A sauce made of red beans is poured over it.

**PERSPIRING HANDS.**—Persons troubled with perspiration of the hands will find the following a simple and inexpensive remedy:—Take a rather large piece of camphor with as few sharp edges as possible. Two or three times daily, according to the copiousness of the perspiration, rub the hands with this lump of camphor just as though it were soap. The result is immediate, and if perspiration is not completely stopped it will at least be considerably decreased. Afterwards the camphor need only be employed when necessary to avoid return of perspiration. It is well to soap the hands before using the camphor, as this will aid the action of the latter on the skin. However, it is absolutely necessary to rinse the hands in clean water after soaping them, before using the camphor. In fact, the latter makes soap turn into a greasy substance, insoluble in water, which adheres to the hands or vessels containing the suds. This remedy is so simple that one might be inclined to employ it for other parts of the body, which would be a great mistake, and might have serious consequences. These liquids would poison the blood were they not taken away by perspiration.

**PASSING OF CORK STOPPERS.**—The man who made the discovery many long years ago that a little tapered cylinder of cork was the very best bottle stopper has only been exceeded as a practical genius by those who, within the past century, have set themselves to work to improve upon and undo this early invention, and to get upon the market anything else than a "cork." On both hands there have been successes, the cork people having by improved machinery reduced their price so that there is still to-day nothing cheaper for the closing of a bottle; the patent stopper men, for their part, having shut off avenue after avenue for the use of corks, coming to absolutely control certain lines of trade. Yet the beginning of the end may almost certainly be seen "as through a glass, darkly." After five centuries of use, the cork-closing bottles are passing slowly and with many an effort to hold their own, but passing nevertheless. Rubber, metal, glass, pasteboard, and pulp are the new coverings of the day that here and there are taking the cork's place. There are financial rewards almost beyond the bounds of the imagination for the inventor who hits the popular taste for a cork substitute, or, if not for the inventor, at least for the lucky manufacturer who manages to lease good stopper patent rights.

### THE HANDS.

It is difficult to keep the hands white during the summer months. Gloves are too hot and uncomfortable for country and seaside wear, and, anyhow, one cannot put on gloves every time one runs out into the garden; whilst for rowing, punting, tennis, and such pastimes, gloves are quite out of the question. The sun is therefore bound to burn and tan the whitest hand, and the mischief cannot be cured or even prevented without the greatest watchfulness and care. A good plan is to wash the hands every morning in water which has been whitened by oatmeal, using the following powder instead of soap. Mix fine wheat flour, 500 parts; soap, dried and pulverised, 125 parts; finely powdered orris root, 33 parts; oil of bergamot, 24 parts; keep this mixture in a well-closed jar. To use it take one or two spoonfuls of the powder, mix it to a thin paste with water, and rub the hands with it for some time. Then wash in clean water and dry thoroughly. Afterwards a little of this lotion should be massaged in: Glycerine, 4 parts; yolks of eggs, 5 parts; mix thoroughly. A little lemon juice will also assist in whitening the hands. An excellent cosmetic for the same purpose is made with Eau de Cologne, 1 wineglass; lemon juice, 1 wineglass; brown Windsor soap, 2 cakes. Scrape the soap to a powder, and mix the whole well in a mould. When hard it will be ready for use. Discoloured nails may be treated by rubbing with liquid ammonia if the stains are caused by acid. Vinegar or lemon juice will suffice if the mischief is due to alkalies. To remove nitric acid stains from the nails and fingers, touch the spots with solution of permanganate of potassium, then wash in diluted hydrochloric acid and finish by washing in clear water.

### THE CHILDREN'S TEETH

The importance of a sound first set of teeth is as great to the child as a sound second set is to the adult.

Children should be taught to use the toothbrush early.

Food left on the teeth ferments, and the acid formed produces decay.

Decay leads in time to pain and the total destruction of the tooth.

The substance of the following rules should therefore be impressed constantly upon all children:

The teeth should be cleaned at least once daily.

The best time to clean the teeth is after the last meal.

A small toothbrush with stiff bristles should be used, brushing up and down and across and inside and outside and in between the teeth.

A simple tooth-powder or a little soap and some precipitated chalk taken up on the brush may be used if the teeth are dirty or stained.

It is a good practice to rinse the mouth out after every meal.

All rough usage of the teeth, such as cracking nuts, biting thread, etc., should be avoided, but the proper use of the teeth in chewing is good for them.

When decay occurs it should be attended to long before any pain results. It is stopping of a small cavity that is of the greatest service.

**FLANNELETTE.**—Whatever you swathe your child in, there is one fabric which you must avoid above all, and that is flannelette. This is one of the most dangerous fabrics ever invented by the ingenuity of man; it is neither one thing nor another; it is neither fish, fowl, nor good red herring. It has the name of flannel without any of its virtues, and it possesses none of the good qualities of cotton-wool. But the main objection to flannelette, especially as a material for children's clothing, is its frightfully inflammable quality. It does not smoulder, like wool; it blazes like paper soaked in paraffin.

## Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

*The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.*

*All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.*

**POOR MILL.**—A number of the fashionable costumiers of London lend costly lace bridal veils out "on hire."

**ETHEL.**—Marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics contracted in a cathedral or other church of England are legal.

**GREVILLE.**—The Welsh, or, rather, the Cymric, is a language, and one of the oldest in the world. It is Celtic, and of Indo-European origin.

**ONE WHO HAS TRAVELLED.**—Modern Rome is said to be the city best supplied with water in the world; but ancient Rome had a supply of nearly seven times the quantity.

**DONE TWICE.**—The penalty for not giving a penny stamped receipt for a sum of £2 and upwards is £5, and it is, if an information is laid, levied equally on the person giving and the person taking such unstamped receipt.

**R. S.**—A man convicted of bigamy, at the expiration of his sentence would, unless divorced by the Divorce Court, be liable to contribute towards the maintenance of his first and only wife.

**A TEN YEARS' READER.**—The first private execution in London, and the second in England, was that of a youth named Mackay, who was hanged inside Newgate, for the murder of his aunt, on September 8, 1668.

**GEOFFREY.**—A man may join as many registered societies as he can find willing to take him, but if he tells, as he should do, that he is already a member of two when he offers to join a third, the third is not likely to take him.

**TWO BRES.**—The difference between a man of Kent and a Kentish man is that a man of Kent is born in the county on the eastern side of the Medway, and a Kentish man one who was born in the portion of the county on the western side of the river.

**MRS. ARBUTHNOT.**—Seize and lock up the hens until the owner compensates you for the damage they have done; or take out a small-debt summons against her, and get her into court. She will not be impertinent there. Pity you cannot train a dog in your garden.

**SALLY B.**—The use of violet ink is not an affectation, but based on substantial reasons. It dries more quickly than any other. It does away with the use of blotters for that very reason. It flows more freely than any other, too. You can hardly ever make an indistinct letter or mark when writing with violet ink. And another beauty about it is that it never changes its colour, and it does not appear sticky on paper.

## DEFECTIVE SIGHT

Many people suffer from bad sight or films and specks. All such should send to **STEPHEN GREEN**, 210, Lambeth Road, London, for his little book "How to Preserve the Eyesight." This tells of **SINGLETON'S EYE OINTMENT** a cure for all troubles of the eyes, eyelids and eyelashes, having 300 years' reputation as the best remedy. Supplied in ancient pedestal pots for 2/- each by all chemists and stores. Please note that it retains its healing virtues for years.

**D. D.**—The gates of the public parks in London are closed at different times fixed by the Ranger.

**ANXIOUS TOM.**—Blind persons using dogs for their guidance are exempt from dog tax; but the exemption does not apply to blind persons who keep dogs for any other than the above-named purpose.

**OLD READER.**—There is a St. Margaret in the calendar. She was one of the most popular saints of the early English Church. She was the daughter of a pagan priest at Antioch, but being a Christian, refused to marry the Roman Governor. She was, in consequence, horribly tortured and beheaded.

**WIGTON.**—The first stone of St. Paul's Cathedral was laid on June 21, 1675 (26 Charles II.), the choir being opened for the first time for Divine service on the day of thanksgiving for the peace of Ryewick (December 2, 1651, 3 William III.), and the last stone of the structure was laid at the top of the lantern A.D. 1710. The whole building was completed in thirty-five years by one architect (Sir Christopher Wren) and one master mason (Mr. Thomas Strong), and while one prelate (Dr. H. Compton) filled the metropolitan see of London.

**MX7. H.**—What I think should be done with your foul-mouthed, abusive neighbour is to let her severely alone. She is encouraged to persist by seeing that she annoys you. If you would for a single week pass as if you neither saw nor heard her, she will either desist because she sees she is beaten and other people are witnesses of her discomfiture, or she may strike at you, and then she falls at once into the hands of the police. As for suing her for damages, that is a remedy against those who have something to lose. She has nothing—not even character.

**WORRIED AGNES.**—I know, from sad experience, how difficult it is to manage fractious children, but have generally found that if allowed to have a little bit of their own way they turn round and caress the hand that was held out threateningly to chastise them. Temper must exhaust itself. A good fit of passion, with a volume of harmless, explosive expletives, does man or woman good. Why not a child? Have a little patience with the poor petulant morsel of humanity. Think of the past days of your own growing-up.

**ALMA.**—Love "engagements" are either express or implied. When a lover pays what are called "attentions," and persists in them, they tacitly drift into an engagement to pop the momentous question some time or other. In that case the naming of the bridal day is about the last step in the courtship.

**SUFFERER.**—Change from a bed to a hammock is often very beneficial to a sick person who is not too weak to be moved. It is a pleasant variation; the soft, yielding folds support, but do not tire the body, and sleep is more refreshing than in a bed. The patient should be warmly wrapped up while in the hammock.

**INCREDULOUS.**—Artificial tortoiseshell may be made by melting gelatine with various metallic salts. The appearance of tortoiseshell may be given to horn by brushing it over with a paste made of two parts of lime, one part of litharge, and a little soda lye, which is allowed to dry. This is the same as the Indian hair dye, and acts by forming sulphuret of lead with sulphur contained in the albumen of the horn, producing dark spots, which contrast with the brighter colour of the horn.

**AFFLICTED.**—The best remedy for squinting at an early age is to make the child wear spectacles constructed in a manner that will insure his looking in an opposite direction to that in which the defective eye at present inclines. This is best effected by the use of spectacles made in either of the following ways:—First, by obtaining a spectacle frame without a glass on one side, and with the orifice filled in the opposite side with thin horn, through which a small hole should be cut in the centre. The object in wearing this is that the pupil of the squinting eye should be directed towards the centre, to enable the child to see. By this means the muscle of the squinting eye is kept in a state of tension, while the opposite side is contracted. Secondly, a ground glass may be substituted for the horn, a small portion being left bright in the centre. Thirdly, a piece of sticking-plaster may be put half over the glass of the spectacle that covers the defective eye. All these methods have the same tendency. The chief advantage which the horn has over the other spectacles is that it is not so liable to break. In all probability, either of the above remedies will be found sufficient to prevent a confirmed habit of squinting.

**J. JAMES.**—The shortest Parliament that ever sat met in the thirty-fourth year of the reign of Edward I., and existed for one day only. The longest is not that which is historically known as the "Long Parliament," which, according to the general computation, existed 16 years 145 days, or, according to another (outside limit), 17 years and 3 months. The second Parliament of Charles II. met on May 6, 1661, and was not dissolved till January 26, 1678, having thus a duration of 17 years 8 months and 16 days.

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\* \* ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 60-62, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

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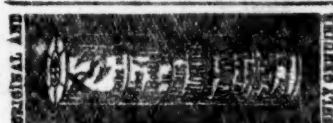
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